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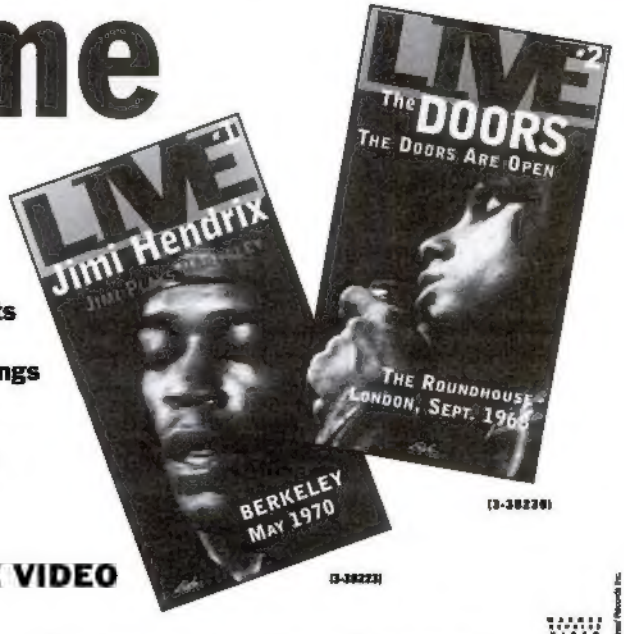

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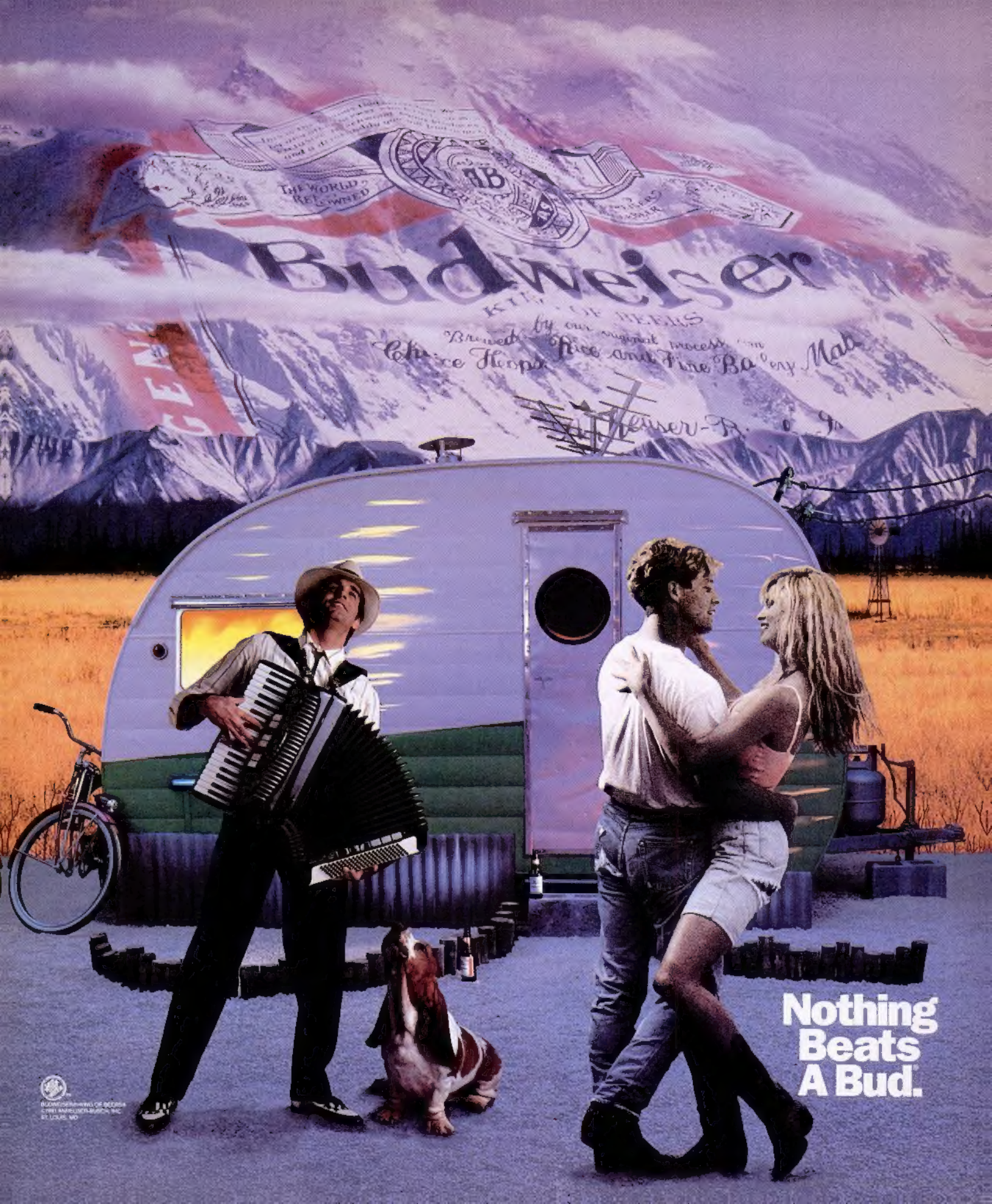
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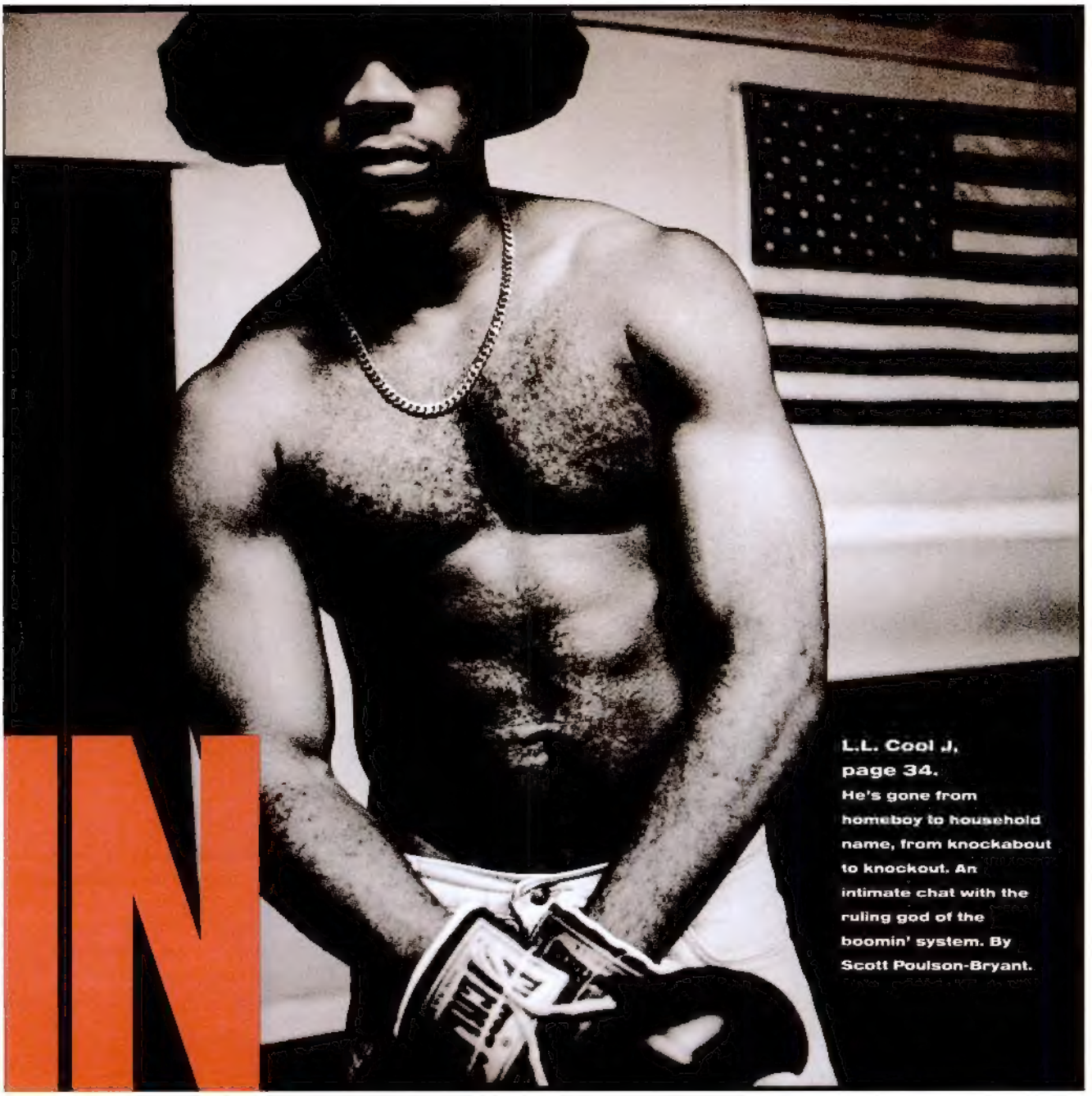

IN

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He's gone from homeboy to household name, from knockabout to knockout. An intimate chat with the ruling god of the boomin' system. By Scott Poulson-Bryant.

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Cover and above photos by Anton Corbijn

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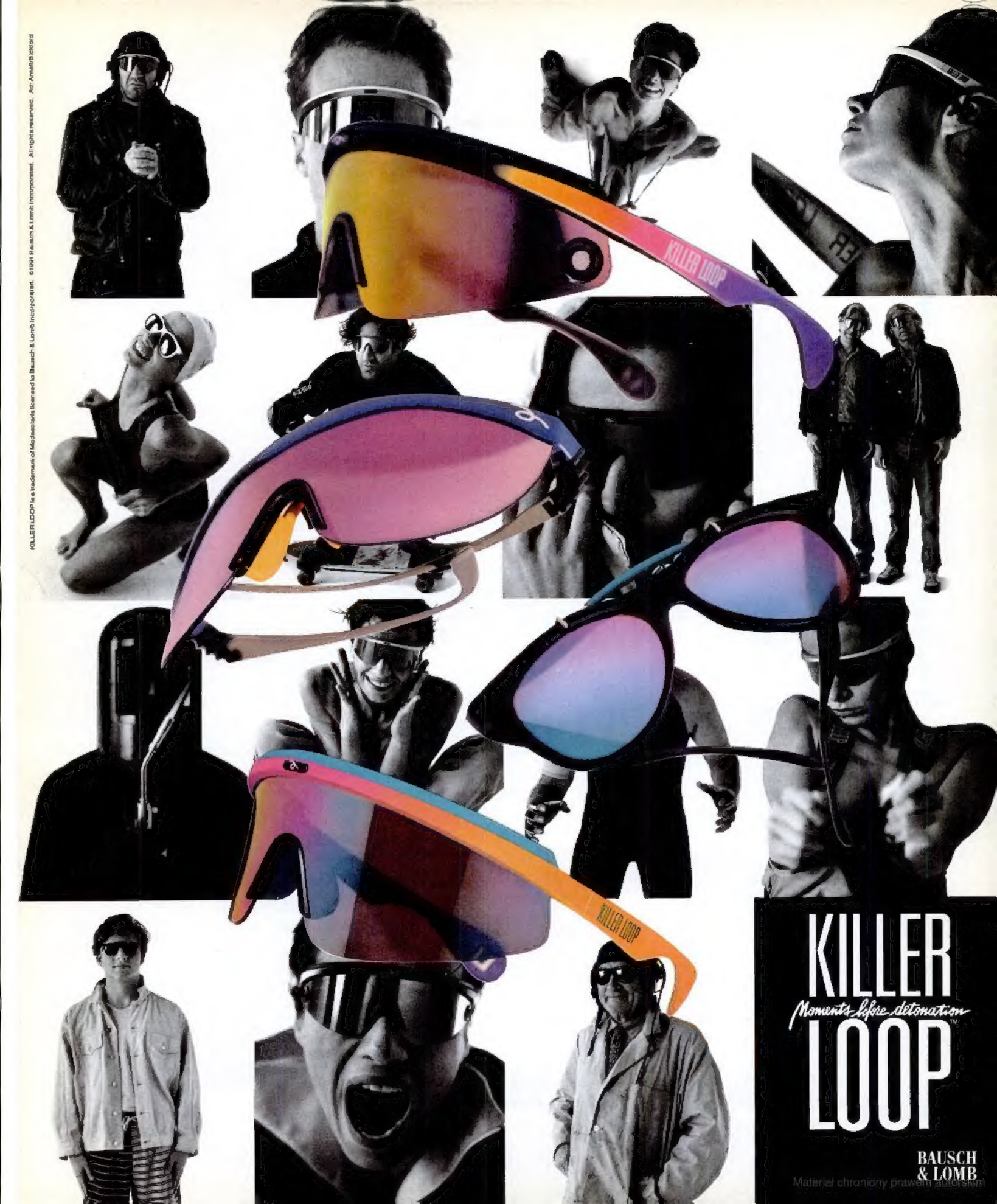

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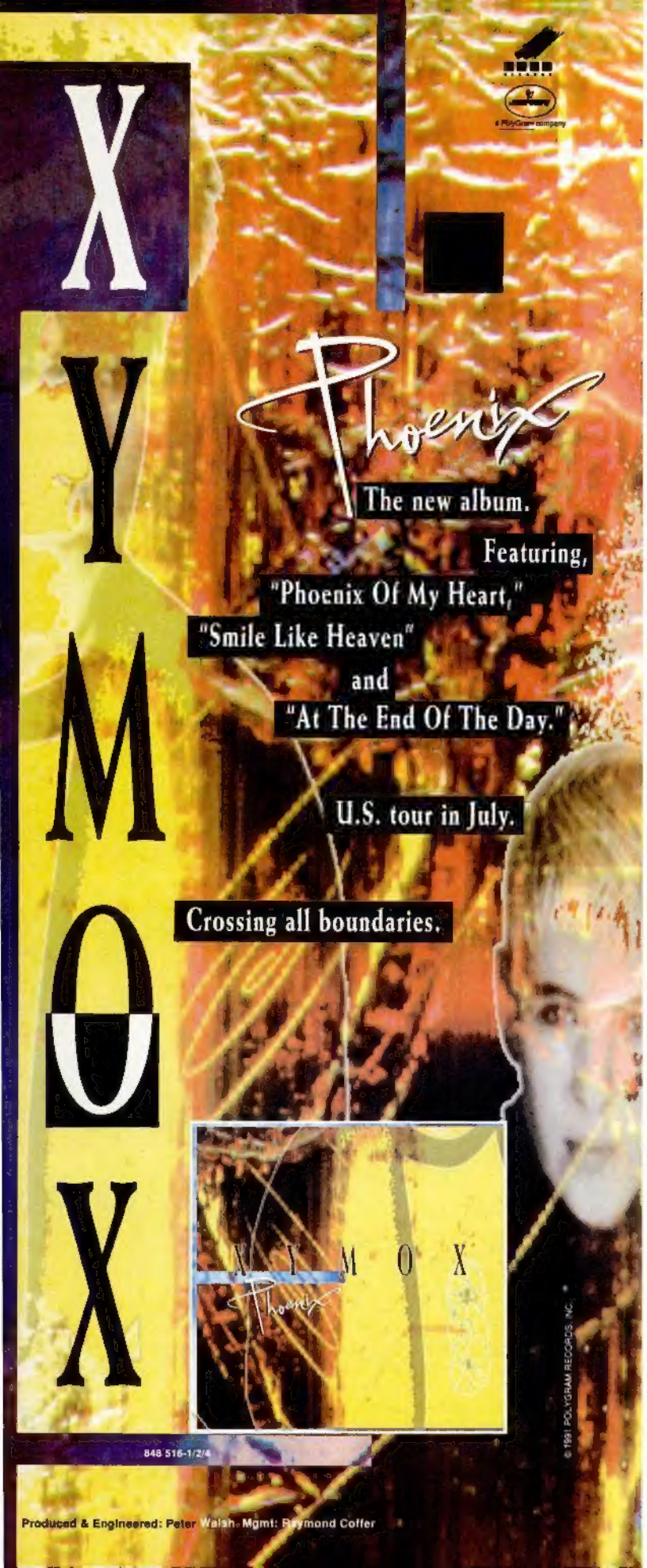

TALE SPINNERS

When cover story writer **Scott Poulson-Bryant** first became L.L. Cool J's publicist, he never imagined that he would later profile the hip hop god *(page 34)*. "I hadn't seen L.L. for a while," he says, "but after his performance on *MTV Unplugged* I just knew I had to do the story." Poulson-Bryant joins SPIN this month as our newest staff writer. • I'm quite good at it, though I'm not sure what *it* is," says **Anton Corbijn**, who photographed L.L. for the cover. Corbijn has photographed ten SPIN covers, including R.E.M. (March 1991), whose Michael Stipe turned the tables on him and took the picture on this page. Corbijn owns his own video company, State Ltd., and has directed videos for Depeche Mode, Front 242, and for U2's upcoming opus. A compilation of his photographs, *Allegro*, was published in May. • **John McCready** writes about Electronic *(page 42)*, the Manchester lads who became superstars without having to leave their hometown. McCready's interest in the group's philosophy is more than vicarious: He recently relocated to Manchester himself. A regular contributor to Britain's *The Face* and *Mix Mag*, McCready also documents the phenomenon of post-club dance music this month (Singles, *page 78*). • *Village Voice* writer and recovering addict **Mole Szeimitz** makes a personal case for free needle exchange for intravenous drug users in this month's AIDS column *(page 67)*. • **Jon Savage**, U.K. writer and author of the forthcoming *England's Dreaming* (St. Martin's), spoke in a London pub with David Thomas, lead singer and theoretician for Pere Ubu, a seminal outfit that has yet to land its share of recognition *(page 46)*. • Contributing Editor **Richard Gehr**, World Beat! columnist and fellow musical globetrotter, follows Santana's awesome legacy through Haiti and Africa *(page 82)*. • **Stephen Danelian** is a freelance photographer whose work has appeared in *Vanity Fair* and *Interview*. For this issue, Danelian lensed Fishbone on the beach in L.A. *(page 51)*.

Scott Poulson-Bryant

John McCready

Anton Corbijn

Employee of the Month: Classified Advertising Manager Fred McIntyre hails from Lexington, North Carolina, the "BBQ" capital of the world. He wishes to thank you for your patronage.

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TOP SPIN

On Pere Ubu's most recent three albums—*The Tenement Year*, *Cloudland*, and the new *Worlds in Collision*—the band has mapped out an emotional landscape of America full of natural wonders marred by random human absurdities (*page 46*).

Boxes. Big, fat, square boxes slightly tilted in the air, sitting on the backs of flatbed trucks, waiting for the Scud missile alarm to be sounded so that the Patriot missiles inside could be unleashed. That's the image that comes to mind whenever I think about this war.

You remember the war? This latest one that's referred to as Desert Storm, the Iraqi War, the Kuwaiti War, the Kinder, Gentler War, the New World Order War, everything but its real title, which is actually World War III.

Everyone held such high hopes for World War III. In the planet's collective consciousness, it was supposed to be the one that took the cake. Yeah, we all wanted to see Slim Pickens riding his nuke all the way down to Moscow Ground Zero, generals huddled in underground bomb shelters while over the intercom you heard the sounds of fail-safe phones melting. We wanted to see big computer maps showing the hundreds of incoming missiles, entire cities being vaporized, the Biblical prophecies of *Revelations*, the Apocalypse, and Rapture all coming true.

But since this "Mother of All Battles" only lasted 20 minutes, and the most lasting image it left us was an empty six-pack box of Patriot missiles on an 18-wheeler, everyone's a little bit embarrassed to call it World War III.

You can't really blame 'em. In fact I wonder why they still bother calling it a war at all, for I don't remember seeing any films or pictures of any dead guys throughout the entire seven weeks of massive media coverage.

Every time the networks cut to some reporter standing in some Mideast city, I felt like it was going to turn out to be a commercial for American Express, you know the ones with the yuppie talking seriously into the camera, "I was on business in the Mideast when a war broke out so I called my American Express representative and told her that I needed an extension on my account . . . " And then they cut to an American Express switchboard operator who explains, "When Mr. Smith called we immediately extended his credit, contacted the aircraft carrier Eisenhower and asked for an emergency flyby, and also sent our consul to the U.N. to intervene on Mr. Smith's behalf. . . . "

No, this wasn't a war at all, but a huge 1,176 hour commercial for the way America would like to believe it behaves. Moral, righteous, and dedicated to honorable ideals.

We never get a spring in New York City. Usually it rains for six weeks and then you wake up one day and it's 90 degrees with 90 percent humidity and the stench of urine permeates every street corner. This year we had one though, a beautiful, glorious spring with those wonderful big days where you feel the sun on your back for the first time since last September, but the air is still cool enough to keep a snap in everyone's walk. The days growing long, the tulips blooming, people actually walking around with smiles.

It was on one of these days, when walking around downtown, amazed at how many truly beautiful women live in New York City, that I came across my friend Bonnie Rulian of the Revolutionary Communist Party outside the New School for Social Research. Since it's been a really bad year for Commies, I thought I'd be nice for a change instead of giving her the usual hard time.

"Bonnie, you Maoist pinup girl, what's happening?"

"We're having a big party to welcome home the mass murderers! Want to come?"

Since I've been keeping a file on mass murderers for a few years now I was upset because I didn't know who she was referring to. And I thought I knew them all.

"Which mass murderers?" I asked.

"You know, the ones from the Persian Gulf. . . . "

And just as I was about to argue the point that maybe if the people of Iraq had taken responsibility for who they followed blindly, maybe if they hadn't invaded Kuwait, and all the other party line justifications for doing what we did, Bonnie handed me a Xeroxed picture.

"I bet you've never seen this," she said. But all I could do was stare. It was a picture that 99 percent of America will never see. Horrifying, graphic, stomach-turning, and what America should think of when it remembers the war.

It was a picture of an Iraqi soldier peering out a window of a bus that was caught in that great traffic jam of the fleeing Iraqi Army.

The soldier was looking up into the sky, watching for American planes. There was only one problem. The planes had already come and gone, and they had left him stuck in that pose, his entire body fried by the fire, every inch of him a scorched shell of a human being.

That's what war does to people, even when we win. But somehow in all the hundreds of quickie magazines on the racks these days selling tributes to our prowess—"Victory in the Gulf," "The Weapons of Desert Storm," "Airpower Over Iraq"—you won't find that picture of the hideously deformed soldier. In fact you won't find any pictures of dead people. Just boxes, and nice shiny planes, and big swinging tanks.

—Legs McNeil

NICK VACCARO

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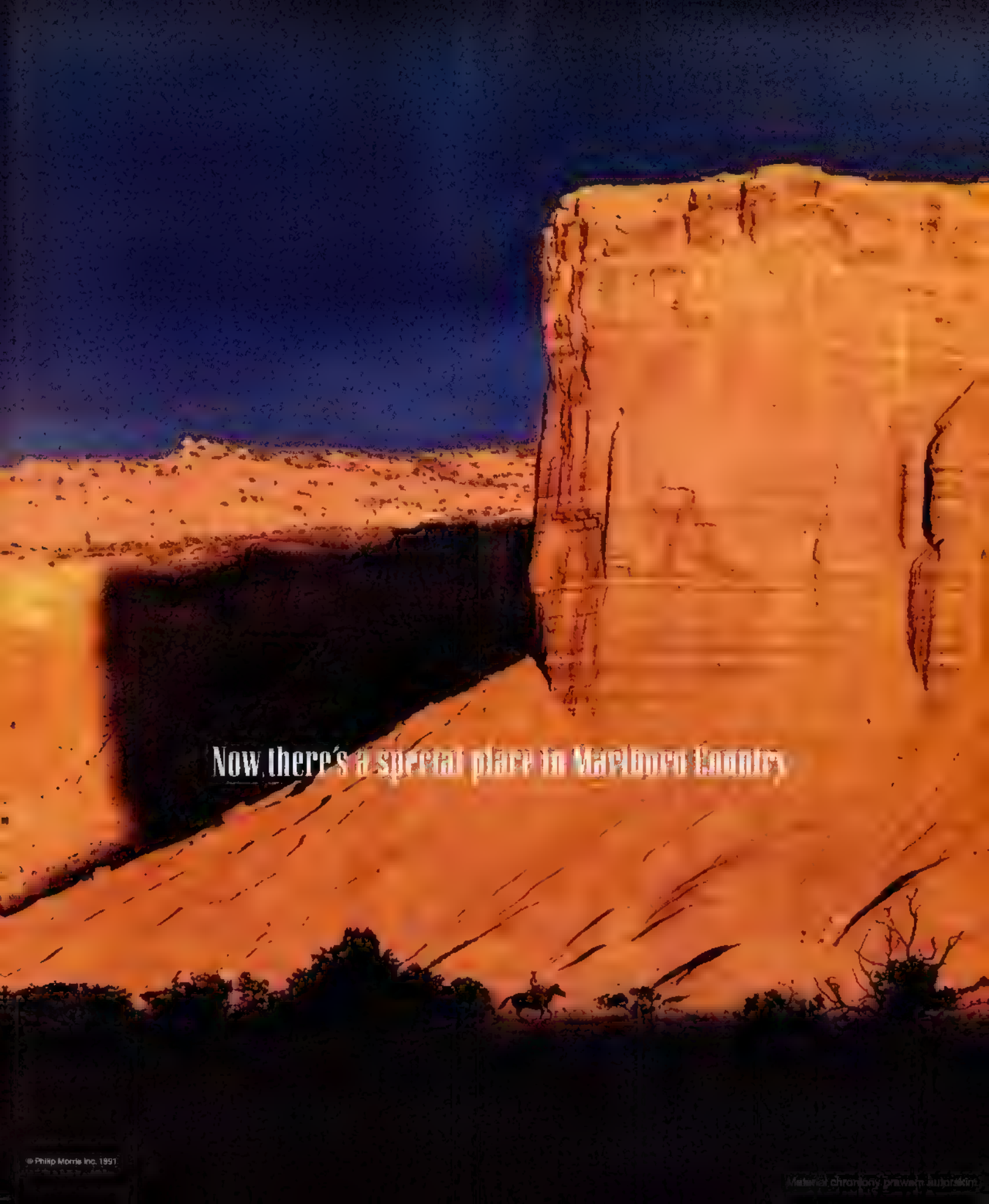

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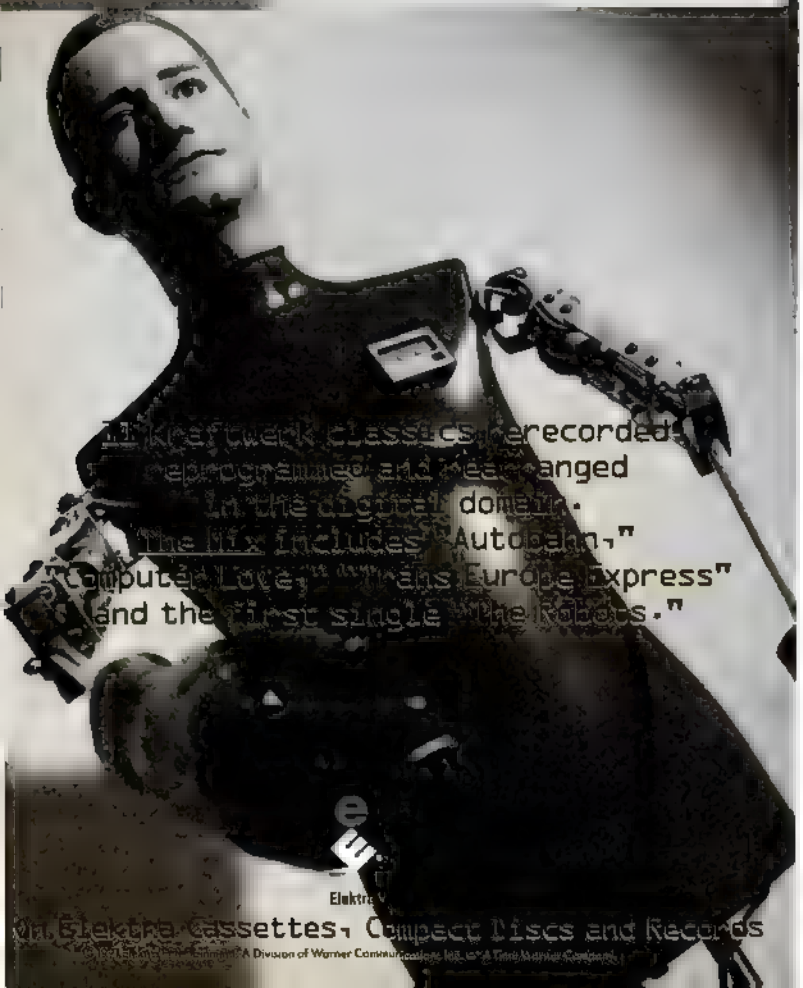


POINT BLANK LETTERS

EDITED BY
NATHANIEL WICE

Silence = Death

Dear Celia Farber,
I have been following your AIDS column for the past two years. While the basic structure of ACT UP is uniform nationwide, individual chapters do differ on how to tackle various aspects of the AIDS epidemic. The direction that our own treatment committee is taking is gradually away from retrovirals such as AZT. This is however a new school of thought, and there are those who remain quite loyal to the "toxic trio" (AZT, DDI, DDC).

I myself began to question the therapeutic benefits of AZT after reading your article "Sins of Omission" [November '89]. Let me tell you I defended that article and really found that I was a lone voice. It is my guess that some activists were angry because they felt it was the only thing we had at the time and maybe somehow you were wrecking the party. Does this make sense? When faced with my own decision whether or not to take AZT, I felt a lot of pressure not only from MDs but almost more so from friends taking it.

I passed out that column with Dr. Lange about AZT at the last ACT UP treatment and data meeting. I'll let you know the reaction.
Keep writing.
David Brown
ACT UP/L.A. Treatment and Data Committee
Los Angeles, California

Viva Love/Hate

The Morrissey interview [April '91] was long overdue. It's funny how you titled him "Lyrical King," but I remember about a year ago you called him "dickhead"—didn't Frank Owen claim the Smiths racists because of their song "Panic," with the line "Hang the DJ" [Singles, July '90]?

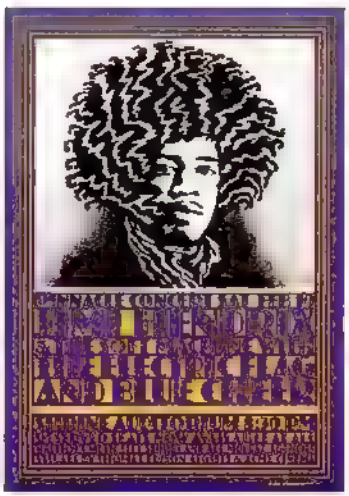
On a lighter note, I think Steven Daly handled the interview with Morrissey very delicately. Morrissey is definitely not England's "last greatest poet," he's the only great pop poet. I haven't seen one shred of artistic ability in any band since the Beatles. Shame on all of you!
Noah J. Uman
Maplewood, New Jersey

I used to think Morrissey was a cool person, but not anymore. Thank you SPIN for opening up my eyes. I now think he is a rude, conceited spoiled brat; not just because I happen to love the Cocteau Twins. Rejection is one thing, but rejection from a fool is cruel.
Shirley Chur
Queens, New York

Purple Phase

Hendrix [April '91] was not a fad, a passing faze in the endless pursuit of the perfect sound. Long after rap, hip hop and be-bop are gone, Jimi's name and influence will remain.

I was only 14 when Hendrix passed on, and at the time, for me, his music was something to admire from afar, his wild antics more of a curiosity. I wish I could have been older and wiser then. Thank you Jimi, now I understand.
Sharon Perry
Duncansville, Pennsylvania



Hendrix: Dead Poet's Society.

COURTESY OF PSYCHEDELIC SOLUTIONS

Hendrix, Morrison, the Byrds . . . holy dinosaurs galore. What's next—an article on either Pete Townshend, Mick Jagger, or Janis Joplin telling us how grateful we should be that these so-called gods from another generation existed to make our music what it is today? Man, this is

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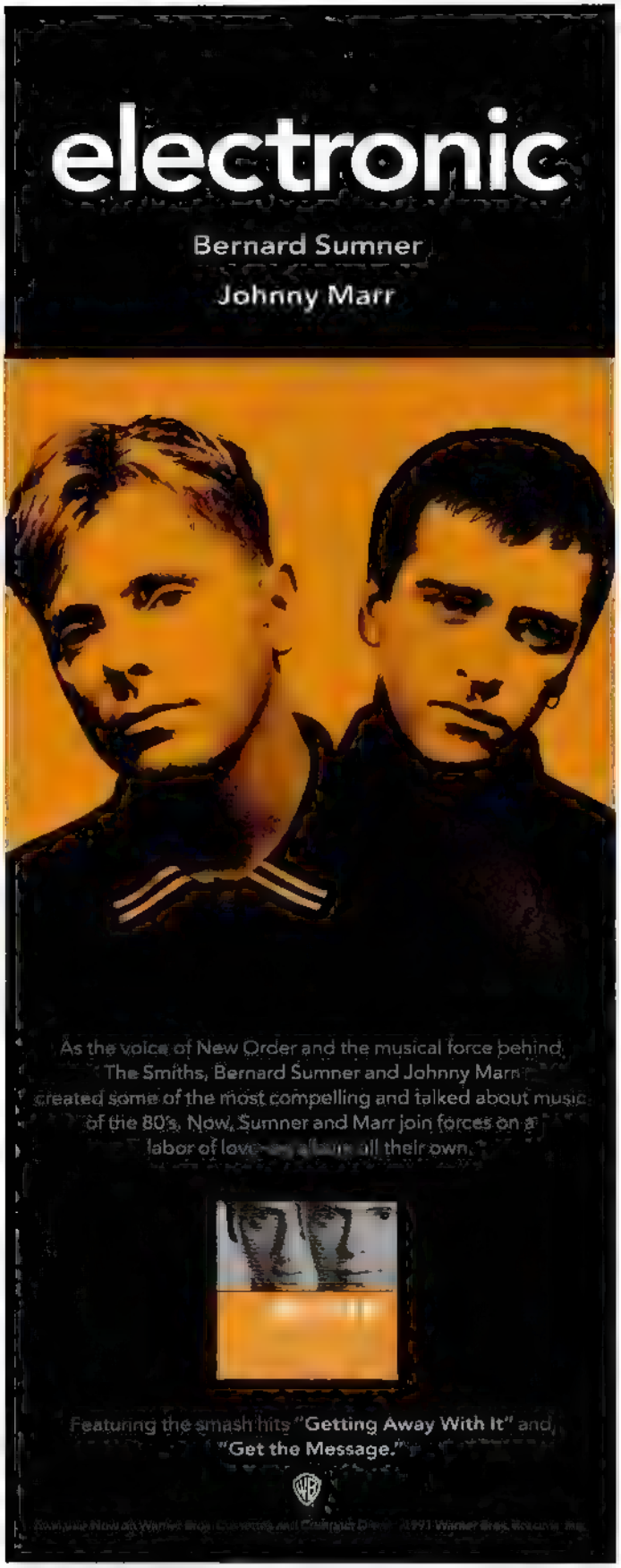
What do you say to the guy with the day job who, at night, sells his soul to rock and roll?


electronic
Bernard Sumner
Johnny Marr
As the voice of New Order and the musical force behind The Smiths, Bernard Sumner and Johnny Marr created some of the most compelling and talked about music of the 80's. Now, Sumner and Marr join forces on a labor of love — an album all their own.
Featuring the smash hits "Getting Away With It" and "Get the Message."

the '90s, stop puking up the '60s.
Mirko Thibault
Montreal, Canada

Strike a Pose for Peace

I always thought that all celebrities were weak-minded, materialistic, and unconcerned. Reading "Fashion for Peace" [April '91] proved me wrong. Some of them do care.

It's sad that, at 15, I'm already sickened by what this country has done (Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Vietnam, and now Iraq). If it's patriotic to support a nation while it drops bombs on other people and sends young kids to die, then I will gladly be unpatriotic, because I think some of the ideals of this country are warped.

Unfortunately, world peace is a hard concept to grasp. One step toward peace will come when the U.S.A. stops playing God, deciding the future of other nations, and meddling when and where it's not wanted.
Mai Fernando
Pelham Manor, New York

Thanks for the "Fashion for Peace" benefit. Good idea. Great shirts. Also, thanks for the "Pray for Peace" slogan on the cover of the R.E.M. issue. I was pleased to see a public statement, however vague, about the war. It was disappointing though, to see that you continue to run ads for the Army National Guard. Fact is, peace isn't going to happen until those who are asked to fight and support war refuse to do so. There's a lot to do in terms of creating alternative opportunities, so people don't have to enlist to pay for college. But there is also a need for publications such as SPIN to refuse to run government propaganda.
Ben Chappell
Bethel College
Newton, Kansas

Shake Your Money Maker

I just started to read your article on the supposedly "cool" Black Crowes [May '91], but had to stop. Very boring. What a waste of space. I saw a Mr. Crowe's Garden performance about three years ago at the fabulous 40 Watt Club, and they sucked. I really thought it was a joke. They were so glam. I thought it was, like, Spinal Tap or something. They were very image-conscious; very slick, but compared to the bands I was used to hearing at that club, not very honest or authentic or innovative, or even really talented.

The point is, now they're these huge megastars, influencing all kinds of people, making all kinds of money. Very slick, very polished, while the really good bands (really cool bands) are still playing small clubs, unable to quit their day jobs.

For the most part you're a very good, comprehensive magazine, but there's something else that's happening in music that not even "college" or "alternative" radio will touch because even that's moving into the image-conscious psychedelic '60s acid shit. Have you seen *120 Minutes* lately? Yuck!

Please don't isolate yourselves from the real talent that's out there. There's more to Athens than R.E.M.
Sara Essex
Athens, Georgia

A Message

Re: Grandmaster Flash [Six Greatest Rock'n'Roll Stories Ever Told, April '91]. That shit was incredible! I framed it! Thank you.
Funken-Klein
Director, Hollywood BASIC
Burbank, California

Casualties of War

I served with the Tenth Medical Laboratory's Pathology Department in the U.S. Army, in Europe a few years back, and one of my duties was assisting the chief of forensic pathology. There are too many (military) checks and balances to promote "fudging," as Jonathan Franklin implies [Antihero, May '91]. To even imply that the military is deliberately trying to deceive anyone is preposterous and completely without any basis of truth.
Mat Scheck
Brazil, Indiana

I commend you on your article on war casualties. It has shown in essence what war really is. War is death. Not just death of body, but also death of spirit (need we forget Vietnam?). Perhaps Americans need to be shown the actual destruction of war to quiet the cheers of victory. I may only be 15, but I know what kind of world I want to live in, and this is not it.
Erin Borden
Dearborn, Michigan

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HERE'S MUD IN YOUR EAR

With its first album in almost two years, Mudhoney's back out of the basement, reminding its imitators that music means more than money and looks.

Seattle's Mudhoney is one of the most important bands to emerge from the Northwest in many years, whether the band members like it or not. The band's powerful combination of '60s garage rock and '70s–'80s punk—which got Mudhoney unwillingly labeled a forerunner in the "grunge" movement—has all but paved the way for Seattle bands to grow their hair out, take off their shirts, soak up the Zeppelin, and make moves toward the majors. And with the release of its second full-length Sub Pop LP, *Every Good Boy Deserves Fudge*, Mudhoney is hungry for major-label phone calls. Literally.

"We keep thinking we'll get free meals from all these record companies trying to impress us," singer–lead guitarist Steve Turner explains. "We're lonely. But no one has approached us. We just want to talk. And get a good meal."

"Now we just eat catsup soup, bread and mustard, pepperoni sticks, and string cheese," singer–rhythm guitarist Mark Arm complains. "We're really paying our dues. But everyone out there is stealing our moves. These young punks are just plugging themselves into the grunge computer and getting rich off it with lots of money in their pockets. And they're not sharing."

"Yeah," Turner adds. "They're not giving us any."

Mudhoney believes that many of the bands jumping this Northwest grunge bandwagon have little to show for themselves besides their location.

"Don't believe Seattle's reputation," Turner says. "I think it's pretty ridiculous, but that happens with any town that gets hot. The city doesn't matter. You have to judge a scene band by band, otherwise mediocre bands slip through the cracks."

But Mudhoney's music speaks for itself. The band sold out three pressings of its first Sub Pop single, "Touch Me, I'm Sick," and its first EP and LP, respectively, won Mudhoney national acclaim in the independent rock world and got the group cited in a 1989 *Rockpool* as the most preferred band by college-radio programmers nationwide. So why do bands like Soundgarden still seem to have all the mass appeal and press?

"They're good-looking," offers Arm. "So they're probably selling more records than we are, and that's appealing to the majors. But as soon as people see the plastic surgery we're getting, then things will change."

And things *are* changing for Mudhoney. Sub Pop executives recently hired a Los Angeles–based public relations firm to push Mudhoney's new album, which they believe to have serious marketing potential. And it does. *Fudge*, which was recorded on an eight-track tape machine in a basement studio, finds Mudhoney packing it away in top form with every cut more refined, tight, and melodic in composition than previous releases.

And while it's easy to coin any marketing move as a sellout, the band isn't concerned. Its members remain true to their punk roots, taking things day by day, letting their hair grow for their late summer tour, and waiting for their drummer, Dan Peters, to return from his stint with the Screaming Trees.

"Besides," Arm says. "These PR guys we have now are the ones that broke Faith No More. And if they can make those guys popular, then we can be *kings*."

DANIEL FIDLER

PHOTO BY MICHAEL LAVINE

Grunge 'R' Us, *clockwise from back left*: Steve Turner, Mark Arm, Matt Lukin, and Dan Peters.

Leaders of the New School *Future Without a Past* (Elektra). With lyrics like De La Soul's and production by the Bomb Squad's Eric Sadler, this is the best rap debut since Main Source's. Rapper Charlie Brown does a mean Doug E. Fresh imitation while Jamaican-born Busta Rhymes adds a touch of dancehall style. "Pinocchio's Theory" will be the rap single to beat this summer (Samuels)

Seal *Seal* (Sire/Reprise). Well whaddya know! It turns out that megaproducer Trevor Horn (ABC, Yes, Frankie Goes to Hollywood) isn't just an '80s guy after all. The statuesque, tribal-marked Seal simmers on this monumental slab of postapocalyptic soul, a canny scaling down of Clever Trevor's trademark bombast. Nineteen ninety-one's first true star is born. (Daly)

Apollo Smile *Apollo Smile* (DGC). Is it metal or dance? There's confusion in club land, especially in this decade of beg, borrow, and steal. Apollo Smile does all of the above unabashedly, but she's still an original with a seductively smooth voice and a menu of samples ranging from grungy guitars and smooth horns to rock-solid drums that makes for one great disco-rock record (Spencer)

HEAVY ROTATION
STAFF SELECTIONS

Diamanda Galas *Plague Mass* (Mute). An opera of nightmares which blames a callous government and an ineffectual God for the plague that we know as AIDS. The black-clad, blood-soaked Galas opens unwilling eyes—showing us skeletons and funerals and quoting *Revelations* with a voice of doom. Excruciating pain for the ears but worth it for the deviance and activism it encourages (Bonner)

Ned's Atomic Dustbin *God Fodder* (Columbia). Sort of a cross between the Cure, the Smiths, and the Connells, but if it were the Cure it would have less guitar, if it were the Smiths it would have more whining, and if it were the Connells it would be from North Carolina instead of Britain. Good pop frenzy from five English guys who manage to sidestep the Manchester tedium. (Blackwell)

Various Artists *20 Explosive Dynamic Super Smash Hit Explosions!* (Pravda). A wonderful tribute to the 1970s heyday of K-Tel Records' TV-advertised hit compilations performed by 20 undergroundish bands. Updated gems include "Little Willy" by Material Issue, "Black Betty" by the Young Fresh Fellows, "Theme From Shaft" by Cheer-Accident, and "Jackie Blue" by Smashing Pumpkins. Cool kitsch. (Blackwell)

SPIES IN THE HOUSE

From Maxwell Smart shoe phones to Dick Tracy wrist communicators, crime technology has advanced to the point that items once considered mere cinematic trickery are now available to anyone with enough dough to spend. Despite the demise of the cold war, the spy biz is booming.

CCS Communications Control Systems, proprietor of the Counter-Spy Shops, is a leader in this pack of mail order and over-the-counter deception and protection providers. Operating under the guise of "Privacy, Security, Safety, and Survival" for over 30 years, the company has contracts with the government, military, state, and local law-enforcement agencies; *Fortune 500* members; and the occasional diplomat or rock star. The company's most formidable item is the SuperCar—a model of your choice which can be customized (up to $200,000) with bullet-proof insulation, flip-down gun portholes, antiexplosive undercoating (should your travels take you across land mines), reinforced ram bumpers, million-watt lights to blind your opponent, an ultrasensitive bomb sniffer, infrared goggles which allow clear vision through fog, smoke, or unlit conditions, or tear gas, oil slick, and smoke-cloud emission systems. These modifications will make your Mercedes safe as a Sherman tank.

On the other end of the spy spectrum is the pen-activated pocket tape recorder (The Executive Investigator Kit, around $500). Simply pull the pen from your pocket and taping begins. But keep your fingers crossed that your target isn't equipped with a tape-recorder detector, another nifty pocket device which emits a silent vibration when a recorder is activated in its presence. Also watch out for the video briefcase, which houses a miniature camera. Other swell briefcases have remote stillshot devices which electrocute the fleeing dupe in his tracks before he can abscond with your valuable documents.

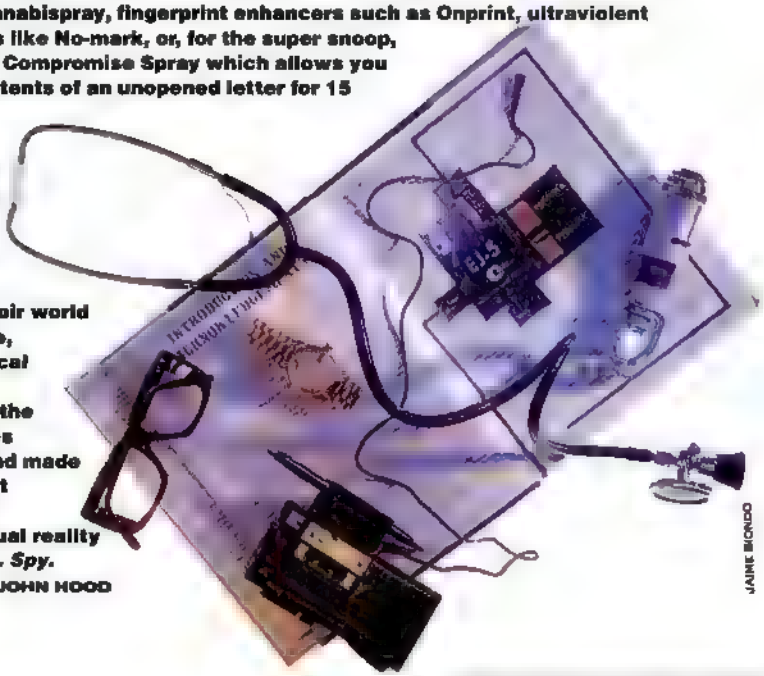
Wannabe detectives listen up. Spy shops make it easy to be sneaky.

To keep other secrets safe, the fax manager, fax encryptor, and facsimile scrambler will code and decode your dispatches, while the Tap Alert rids your phones of intruders. After you've secured your lines of communication, you can work on your home, office, and car. The cigarette pack–sized Privacy Protector bug sweeper is fine for quick checks, but if you're worried you can hire the CCS Sweep Team.

In the aerosol department, the suspicious can buy drug-detection systems like Heroisol or Cannabispray, fingerprint enhancers such as Onprint, ultraviolent crime deducers like No-mark, or, for the super snoop, there's the CIA Compromise Spray which allows you to read the contents of an unopened letter for 15 seconds.

So if you're a paranoid, a South American politico, or you just want to prance around in the noir world of the detective, head to your local spy shop and stock up on all the gadgety goodies that James Bond made possible. Forget Dungeons and Dragons or virtual reality—this is *Spy vs. Spy*.

JOHN HOOD



JAIME BIONDO

A SPIKE LEE JOINT

WESLEY SNIPES · ANNABELLA SCIORRA · SPIKE LEE · ANTHONY QUINN

UNIVERSAL PICTURES presents a 40 ACRES AND A MULE FILMWORKS production a SPIKE LEE joint "JUNGLE FEVER" WESLEY SNIPES · ANNABELLA SCIORRA · SPIKE LEE · OSSIE DAVIS · RUBY DEE · SAMUEL L. JACKSON LONETTE McKEE · JOHN TURTURRO · FRANK VINCENT and ANTHONY QUINN CASTING ROBI REED ORIGINAL SONGS STEVIE WONDER ORIGINAL SCORE TERENCE BLANCHARD EDITOR SAM POLLARD PRODUCTION DESIGN WYNN THOMAS PHOTOGRAPHED BY ERNEST DICKERSON ASC LINE PRODUCER JON KILIK CO-PRODUCER MONTY ROSS **NOW PLAYING** PRODUCED WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY SPIKE LEE ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK ALBUM BY STEVIE WONDER AVAILABLE ON MOTOWN CDs AND CASSETTES A UNIVERSAL RELEASE

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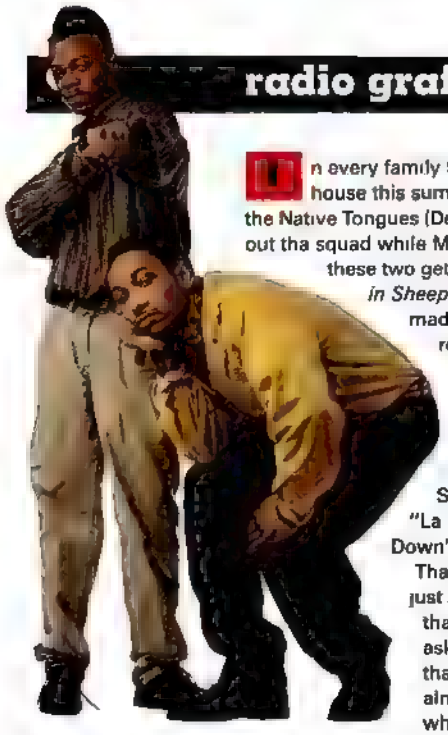
radio graffiti: black sheep



Black Sheep Mista Lawnge, *left*, and Dres.

In every family there'z a black sheep but only one'z rockin' tha house this summer. Black Sheep are tha fresh new edition of the Native Tongues (De La, Quest, Monie, etc.). Dres is tha rhyme pimp out tha squad while Mista Lawnge pumpz tha rear 'tables, and when these two get together it'z a gang bang! Tha debut LP, *A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing*, haz tha traditional comic relief skits made famous by De La Soul wit' Prince Paul, but rockz wit it'z own special ambiance. Dres wit hiz "strobelite hoe humpin' attitude" flipz shit like jam-style judo. Mista Lawnge'z tha navigator responsible for pushin' tha weight of tha 1200s. He'll use Kurtis Blow's "Christmas Rappin'," the S.O.S. Band's "Take Your Time (Do It Right)," Sweet's "Action," Slick Rick and Doug E. Fresh's "La De, Dah De," or a piece of Diana Ross's "Upside Down"—which was my favorite.

Tha album'z intro gives ya tha impression that this iz just some ol' N.W.A shit with tha gangsta attitude till tha sleepin' Dres iz awaken'd by hiz cronie's. When asked why he'z screemin, Dres shoutz, "I dreamt that I wuz hard!" I'm sittin' back laffin' like hell! I almost pissed on myself! This along wit' tha skit where Dres n' Mista Lawnge wanna get uptown and some asshole cabdriver tries to frunt so thay beat tha flag outta hiz ass! Most of this album can be described in just two wordz: *illicit sex*. Femminist'z are gonna have n' orgy wit this! These Sheep make other sexist shit seem like Sunday school song'z! Lemme give ya my pix quik befo I run outta time: 1. "Hoes We Knows" 2. "Strobelite Honey" 3. "Have U.N.E Pull" 4. "Flavor of the Month."

This shit iz in tha tradition of a tongue sandwich, which meanz "It'z in there!" Well they're turnin' off tha lightz, so that'z it. Once again for Radio Graffiti . . . thiz iz Ambassador Bönz. By tha way, y'all: I'm bak!

BÖNZ MALONE

Match the Metal Stars With Their Former Punk Bands

1. **Daniel Rey** (guitarist, Masters of Reality)	a. Uniform Choice
2. **Scott Ian** (guitarist, Anthrax)	b Genocide
3. **Kory Clarke** (vocalist, Warrior Soul)	c. The Lewd
4. **Pat Dubar** (vocalist, Mind Funk)	d. Shrapnel
5. **Chuck Biscuits** (drummer, Danzig)	e. The Fartz
6. **Alex Mitchell** (vocalist, Circus of Power)	f. L7 (from Detroit)
7. **Duff McKagan** (bassist, Guns N' Roses)	g Crucial Truth
8. **Brian Baker** (guitarist, Junkyard)	h. S O D
9. **Kurdt Vanderhoof** (guitarist, Hall Aflame; ex-Metal Church)	i. Black Flag and the Circle Jerks
10. **Rachel Bolan** (bassist, Skid Row)	j. Minor Threat

STEVEN BLUSH

Answers 1.d, 2.h, 3.f, 4.a, 5.i, 6.g, 7.e, 8.j, 9.c, 10.b

THE GREAT PUMPKINS

Smashing Pumpkins' Billy Corgan is going to be a star. Cut from the same cloth as former bad boys Bowie, Page, and Bolan, Corgan recalls the glamorous old-school front man, whose job was to get the girls giddy and send the boys home to work on their moves in the mirror. Smashing Pumpkins are doing what hasn't been done, much less done right, in a long time: They're making cerebral rock with balls. Dig it or don't, that's what they do. Their strength as a live band has made Smashing Pumpkins one of the top-drawing acts in their hometown Chicago, but they continue to be ignored by local critics. "It does me no good to suck up to them, so I don't," Corgan explains. The Chicago music scene has done little to inspire him. "Most of the local bands I've seen seem anal retentive and shortsighted," he says. "They rip off trends that are four or five years old. At least they helped me decide what I *didn't* want to do."

Corgan is serious about playing rock the way he feels it should be played, and the fact that corporate types see big commercial potential in his band doesn't concern him. And the Pumpkins' debut album *Gish* is an intense reflection of his ideals. "The point is to let the music be itself," he explains. "If it doesn't mean anything to you then it's bullshit."

EDDIE UNITES

A Smashing Pumpkin success, *from left*: D'Arcy, Jimmy Chamberlin, James Iha, and Billy Corgan.

TOP PHOTO GREG WATERMANN. BOTTOM PHOTO MICHAEL LAVINE

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STEALING IS FUNDAMENTAL

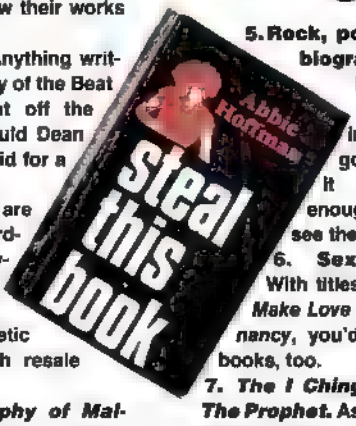
Today's bookstore thieves would probably rather go to jail than be caught stealing a Danielle Steel novel. Independent bookstores across the country told SPIN just what these culturally literate sticky fingers are stealing. Here's the intelligent book thieves' Top Ten.

1. The Three Bs—Paul Bowles, Charles Bukowski, and William Burroughs. After spending their careers detailing hedonistic lifestyles, these three would be the least offended to know their works are stolen regularly.

2. Jack Kerouac. Anything written by this granddaddy of the Beat Generation flies right off the shelves. Besides, would Dean Moriarty have ever paid for a book?

3. Art books. These are the favorites with hardcore book thieves. Everything from Picasso to Mapplethorpe is swiped, not for aesthetic reasons, but for high resale values.

4. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X.* This book is bound to grow in popularity among shoplifters as well as paying customers once Spike Lee completes his film based on the leader's life.



5. Rock, pop, and jazz biographies. Jim Morrison is a big favorite in this category. After all, it was bad enough to pay to see the film.

6. Sex manuals. With titles like *How to Make Love During Pregnancy*, you'd steal these books, too.

7. *The I Ching*/*The Bible*/*The Prophet*. As one Manhattan bookseller said, "Those who steal these books are definitely not in touch with their karma."

8. Andy Warhol books. Anyone one who would bother deserves to get caught.

9. Books on tape. For those not only too lazy to pay but also too lazy to read.

10. *Steal This Book*. With chapters such as "How to Shoplift," this out-of-print Abbie Hoffman classic is the Holy Grail of the book thief set.

KERRY DIAMOND

DEAR ELVIS,

How can I tell if I'm in love?

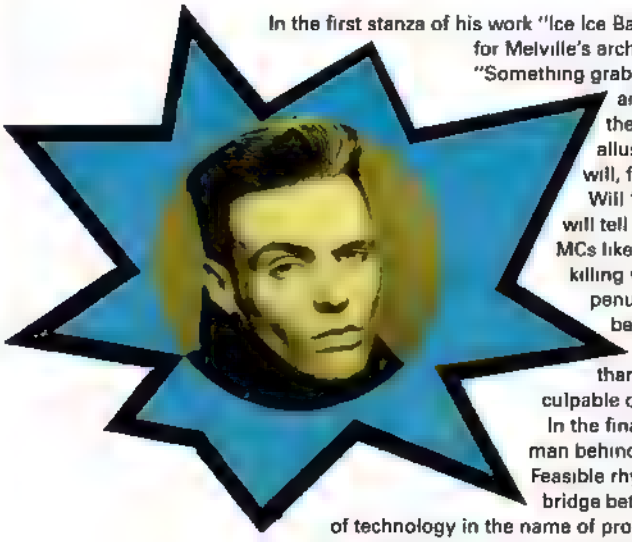
Bram L. Kelcklaw
Brooklyn, NY

Well that's a damn good question, son, because if there's one thing Elvis knows about it's whether or not a man's in love. You know damn well when you're in love because your little ol' heart goes a pitter patter real fast, and you can't think straight about nothing, and you walk around feeling like you're drunk as hell all the time even though you probably ain't had a drink of hard liquor in two or three days, and you'd rather just walk around and hold her hand than sit down and eat a good hot plate of barbecue and cole slaw. I'm getting downright sweaty around the collar just thinking about it, so I better go now.

Rock the Casbah,
Elvis

cracking ice

"My rap music . . . tells a story. You can write a book on each of my thoughts."
—Vanilla Ice, *Newsweek*, December 3, 1990



In the first stanza of his work "Ice Ice Baby," Vanilla Ice reaches deep into the American canon for Melville's archetypal image of evil, the great white whale: "Something grabs a hold of me tightly / Then I flow like a harpoon daily and nightly." A lesser poet might equate himself with the harpoonist or perhaps even the whale. Mr. Ice's allusion is genius. His narrator *is* the harpoon, a pen if you will, flowing over the stark, blank parchment of America.

Will "Ice Ice Baby" be the *Wasteland* of our era? Only time will tell. As the narrator indulges in cannibalism ("I'm cooking MCs like a pound of bacon"), toys with ritualistic voodoo ("I'm killing your brain like a poisonous mushroom"), and penultimately flees his persecutors ("I'm trying to get away before the jackers jack") he is ever conscious of his responsibility as poet. Mr. Ice stresses: "Anything less than the best is a felony." Sloppy verse is indeed a culpable offense.

In the final stanza, scholars get an introspective glimpse at the man behind the voice: " 'Cause my style's like a chemical spill / Feasible rhymes that you can vision and feel." Mr. Ice creates a bridge between the elemental world and man's relentless pursuit of technology in the name of progress. The result? A metaphoric yet tangible toxic wasteland. One is forced to acknowledge the grandeur and enormity of Mr. Ice's achievement—this victory of form over function. It is indeed a "hell of a concept."

CHRIS SANTELLA

TOP PHOTO: JAIME BIONDO

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The new Suzuki Bandit.™ If you start seeing flashes of red before your eyes, don't be concerned about your vision. Chances are you've just caught a glimpse of the new Suzuki Bandit.

The Bandit is style with substance. A steel-tube diamond-style frame provides optimum strength with minimum weight. The riding position is roomy and comfortable. And its contemporary design really showcases the bike's technology.

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canada fly

The Dream Warriors crash the charts with their "boombastic" style of hip hop. Canadian rap's not just for Canadians anymore.

Toronto, Ontario, has a West Indian population of more than 200,000—the largest outside the Caribbean. So it shouldn't be much of a surprise that many strong and fluent rap artists are thriving to the beat of an increasingly vital and boogie-down black music community there. King Lou and Capital Q, the Toronto-based rap duo known as the Dream Warriors, celebrate their West Indian heritage with a nimble hip hop blend of reggae, ska, and jazz-inflected grooves—and make their (until now) little known Canadian rap scene proud by reaching unheard-of levels of success.

Their debut album, *And Now the Legacy Begins*, is the result of years of work, exercise, and patience by these two crazily energized rap fans–turned–stars. "In our neighborhood, you either played sports or entertained in some way—even if that meant entertaining by seeing how much stuff you could steal," says King Lou. "Q and me were both into music, so this is where we ended up." Although the Dream Warriors consider themselves influenced by the nearby hard-edged New York rap scene, they take a decidedly balanced view of their role in hip hop. "We're influenced as much by Bob Marley as we are by Public Enemy. We want to give out knowledge, but also move the audience to have a good time."

Their single, "My Definition of a Boombastic Jazz Style," takes its basic groove from a Canadian game show theme and includes interludes from a jazzy Quincy Jones bossa nova. "Wash Your Face in My Sink" imparts some metaphorical lessons ("Never ever will I fall to the effects of bandwagonism," raps King Lou) over a pop-song beat worthy of some of the best swinging-'60s-London pop tunes. "U Never Know a Good Thing Until U Lose It" reverberates with a funky scratch-guitar sample and casual shuffle-drum that, says King Lou, shows that Dream Warriors are definitely "built for the '90s." But don't question these guys on the tracks they use. Says King Lou, "People always want to know what we sampled. I say forget the samples, just get into the grooves, and," he says, pointing toward his heart, "pay attention to what's in here, what got those grooves in the first place."

Due to record-industry ignorance and reluctance, black talent in the provinces went unnoticed for a long while in favor of rock-flavored mainstream music. "In Canada, rap artists have had lots of time to create a voice and style," says King Lou. At a party, he cornered Ivan Berry, the founder of Beat Factory, a management and production company largely responsible for this seemingly sudden and explosive wave of Canadian rap acts. King Lou then wound up working with some of Berry's Beat Factory groups (most notably Michie Mee, a female rapper who's worked with BDP) before getting back together with Capital Q and bringing the sugar cane–carrying Dream Warriors to the forefront of Canadian rap. In songs like "Ludi" (an ode to an island board game), the Dream Warrior voice is right in place. King Lou sends crazy shout-outs to brothers and sisters across the black diaspora while Capital Q guides him along, riding the ska beat like the last island-music fan. King Lou compares his relationship with Capital Q to a sort of athletic team.

"Q's like the guy who likes to just play the sport. I like to find out how the sport was invented or the ball was made. We complement each other," he explains.

The Dream Warriors have worked with Slim Gaillard and Gang Starr, and were recently hailed as the Beatles of Rap by a Toronto writer. "I think Canadians just want to be proud and they're excited that something good is coming out of Canada and getting exposure," Capital Q says.

Boombastic stuff, indeed.

SCOTT POULSON-BRYANT

Canada's definition of a boombastic rap style. Rising rap duo, the Dream Warriors. Capital Q, *left*, and King Lou.

PHOTOS BY RICK McGINNIS

It jams even before you start playing.

Katana 600. For the name of your nearest Suzuki motorcycle and ATV dealer, call 1-800-255-2550. Please ride with care. At Suzuki, we want every ride you take to be safe and enjoyable. So always wear a helmet, eye protection and protective clothing. Ride smart and never under the influence of alcohol or other drugs. Know your equipment before you use it by reading your owner's manual. We also recommend you take a riding skills course. For the one nearest you, call the Motorcycle Safety Foundation at 1-800-447-4700.

guitars for drella

You're about to see a kid in a candy store," says Cinderella's Tom Keifer with a grin as we enter the Dallas Convention Center for the 14th annual Greater Southwest Guitar Show. Keifer, whose guitar collection is so large he's stopped counting, has come to scout vintage Gibsons, a rumor that Ritchie Sambora just bought a Les Paul in Japan for $38,000 having sparked his curiosity. Keifer's most expensive acquisition was also a Les Paul, a 1958 Sunburst for which he paid $15,000.

Nothing could be finer than a Sunday at the guitar show with Cinderella's Tom Keifer.

Broadcasts leaking the fact that Keifer might show up bring out fans in full force. One guy immediately approaches, excitedly pulling up the sleeve of his black T-shirt. Tattooed on his arm are the words "One for Rock and Roll," the name of the sixth song on Cinderella's recent *Heartbreak Station* album. "Cool, man!" Keifer says, laughing. "Doesn't that sort of scare you?" I ask, as the tattoo boy disappears into the throng. "Nah, it's cool," he assures me.

Keifer's first purchase is a Gibson bass. "This is a gift for Nikki Sixx," explains the generous guitarist. It turns out that the Mötley Crüe bassist had recently defended Cinderella in a letter to *People* after the magazine ran a sarcastic review of *Heartbreak Station*.

Much later, as I treat him to a two-dollar lunch of hot dogs and Coke, Keifer mulls over getting the Gibson guy to lower one Les Paul's price from $30,000 to $25,000. After we eat, however, he settles for two early-'50s Fenders, shelling out a paltry $13,500.

"Those Gibson prices are ridiculous now," he complains. "I bought one a couple of years ago for only ten thousand dollars and just last week I fuckin' gave it to Pat Travers. We got really drunk and Pat was like, 'You got all these nice guitars and shit, you should give me one of 'em.' So I picked up this 1960 Sunburst, and was like *(slurs voice)*, 'I wanncha t' havvve thisss.'"

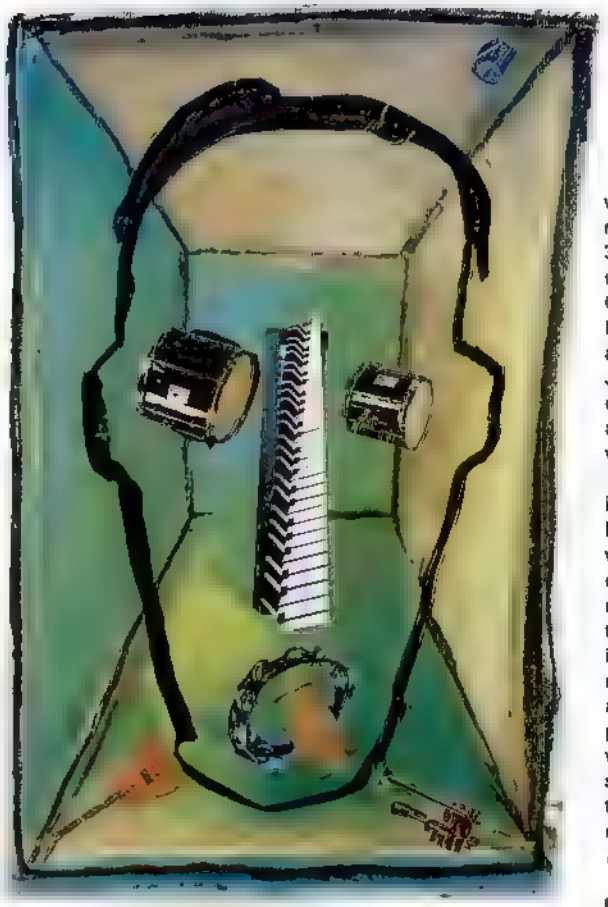
"Hey man, we should go get really drunk later," I quickly suggest.

"Nah, that'd be cool but I gotta catch a plane," he says.

Maybe next time.

MARK BLACKWELL

Tom Keifer at home with his guitars.



THE THIRD DIMENSION

Welcome to the future. 3-D recording is here.

The human ear and the way it processes sound has always been the inspiration for recording technology advances—the jump from mono to stereo, for example—but nothing has ever reproduced the sensation of *locating* sounds the way the ear does, in a 360-degree sphere of space. Until virtual audio, that is. Virtual audio records sounds in 3-D, and is drastically changing music listening and engineering as we know it.

Virtual audio takes its conceptual cue from virtual reality, an imaging tool wherein the user actually moves and interacts within a 3-D, computer-generated universe. Christopher Currell, the Los Angeles-based Synclavier performer and engineer on Michael Jackson's *Bad* album, developed VA while seeking a way to put 3-D sound into virtual reality.

Ron Gompertz, a partner in San Francisco's Heyday Records, has been working with Currell and possesses one of only two 3-D recording heads existing in the U.S. The recording unit is a computer-designed mannequin head with analytical-quality mikes placed where the eardrums would normally be. The signal is then processed so that it can be retrieved exactly as the "ears" heard it.

Think of it this way: Regular stereo headphones play music *into* your head, but VA places the music *away* from your head, recreating the room in which the recording was made. This is no bullshit. If the guitar amplifier was suspended from the ceiling during recording, and the guitarist was sitting in a squeaky chair in front of the mike, you would hear the guitar *over your head*, and the squeaking chair *in front of you* while listening to the playback on headphones.

Gompertz recently used VA as the live mike for a radio talk show, and commuters immediately started calling from car phones saying they were actually having 3-D effects in their cars. Heyday is now recording all of its artists on VA, including Connie Champagne, the Bedlam Rovers, and Barbara Manning, while Currell is spending much of his time in Japan, continuing to improve upon the system.

DEAN KUIPERS

PHOTO BY DIDI ZILL ILLUSTRATION BY ANASTASIA VASILAKIS

a new julian cope L.p yeah.

"MOTHER EARTH IS PREGNANT... FOR Y'ALL HAVE KNOCKED HER UP"
Funkadelic, 1970

julian cope/peggy suicide is a copious new album crowded with 19* of the coolest songs about LOVE, LIFE and MOTHER EARTH you've ever heard!

features **"BEAUTIFUL LOVE," "EAST EASY RIDER," "SAFE SURFER" & "DRIVE SHE SAID"**

*cassette includes special bonus track

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ISLAND

fear of security

Prompted by an excessive number of physical confrontations between concert security people and patrons, a grand jury is conducting an unprecedented investigation into security practices at New Jersey's Meadowlands Sports Complex. At a November AC/DC show, 21-year-old David Gregory became the third person to die at a Meadowlands concert in the past year and a half when a state trooper struck him and his head slammed against a curb. It was later determined that the officer acted responsibly and was cleared of charges.

"The Gregory case reflects a nationwide problem of lax [concert] security practices," explains Bergen County, New Jersey prosecutor John Fahy. And many of the problems stem not from police officers assigned to concerts, but from concert venues' privately hired security guards with little of no training.

"These crimes continue because they're usually settled quietly in civil court, giving venues little impetus for reform," says Fahy.

"Generally, management accepts settlement losses because costs are far below what they would be to train and pay competent people," explains lawyer George Hamilton, who won $1,500 for Craig Mills, after Mills suffered a concussion and permanent wrist damage at a Cure concert in Philadelphia. Says Mills: "I must have been in the wrong guy's way. They launched me down two flights of stairs."

With this investigation Fahy hopes to send a message to concert halls and security companies across the country: "It's absurd and offensive that venues don't accept the responsiblity for their paying patrons' safety," he says. In the meantime, the Meadowlands has released a celebrity-studded videotape lecturing patrons about proper behavior at shows. Watch for the grand jury report in late June.

MIGUEL GIRON

There's a riot going on.

A FAREWELL TO JOHNNY

When I heard Johnny Thunders had finally died I couldn't help thinking it was too bad he didn't know exactly when it was going to happen because he could have charged admission. People had been paying to watch him die for over a decade. It had become his act. I'd see him be completely alert before a concert and then begin to stagger the moment he hit the stage. He knew that's what they were paying for. He was a professional junkie.

Of course he was a lot of other things too. He was a bastard, a thief, and completely self-centered. He was a work of art. He was a sweet and classy sort of lowlife, like a rock'n'roll Italian prince: not one who grows up to be a king, but one who lives in exile, legendary for his noble instincts, his entourage of smear-eyed sullens and gangsters, and his capacity for exotic pleasures. And he sure knew how to dress.

The thing that's got to be said, though, and the only thing he would care about being remembered for, was that he could play guitar. Baseball was the only other thing he was really good at, and once it was clear the coach wouldn't let him keep his hairdo, all he had left was the guitar. He was extremely influential too. His style, as much as that of Jimmy Page or Keith Richards, made the whole heavy metal genre possible. But that's not the point.

The point is that Johnny *had it*. Like Jack Kerouac or Frank O'Hara as writers, or Jackson Pollock in paint, he was never short of nerve and he was magnificent. He played with a mesmerizing, casual fury, ripping chords from his guitar as if they were love letters he'd stopped himself just in time from sending. He really only spoke with his guitar, so when he played he said a lot and said it directly. He burned.

RICHARD HELL

KILLER REVEALED

After eight years of litigation, Peter Matthiessen's *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse* (Viking) is back on bookshelves with startling new evidence for Leonard Peltier's innocence. Peltier, leader of the American Indian Movement, has served 13 years in prison for murdering two FBI agents. In the epilogue, the real killer reveals himself to the author—if only anonymously. The confessed killer could come forward and plausibly argue a form of self-defense, according to Matthiessen, but that didn't help Peltier at his trial [see Antihero, Feb '91], and probably wouldn't help the real killer at his. Meanwhile, Peltier would still be in jail for "aiding and abetting."

STACI BONNER

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THE COLD ROCK STUFF

THESE ARE A FEW OF OUR FAVORITE THINGS.

Barfo Candy

Designed by Mark Newgarden, the man responsible for many of the Pee Wee Herman design masterpieces, and Drew Friedman, comic editor of *National Lampoon*, Barfo Candy is by far the grossest candy on the market. What the brave customer gets is a small squeezable container with a plastic human head on top of it. Inside the container is green, purple, or red sugary gunk. When you give it a squeeze the candy oozes out of the character's mouth like vomit. Yuck! Available at a sleazy candy store near you.

Photo Booths

They've been around for a good while, so you'd better use 'em before they all break down and become extinct. Whether black and white or color, three poses or four, in focus or out, strips from photo booths freeze all the wonderfully happy, important, and stupid times of your life. Slide a couple of bucks into the slot (you just have to make sure they aren't wrinkled), sit down on the stool, and smile. Find them scattered in bars, drug stores, and other fine establishments with a keen sense of history. Say cheesy.

Dylan

Books commemorating Bob Dylan's half century on this planet are currently appearing on bookshelves across the country. Daniel Kramer's *Bob Dylan: A Portrait of the Artist's Early Years* (Summit) is a new work with lush images of the singer in his early 20s. The book captures Dylan mesmerizing his audiences, communing with nature, and hanging out with Joan Baez. Clinton Heylin's

Bob Dylan Behind the Shades (Citadel Underground) features other artists talking about what it was like to work with the legend. What emerges from both books is a sense of intimacy and insight that makes you feel like you know the guy pretty well.

Ginseng Up

Enthusiasts of the magically medicinal ginseng root need not look any further for their leisure soft drink of choice. Available in seven flavors (original, lemon/lime, grape, orange, cola, ginger, and apple), Ginseng Up is a beverage that some believe can help cure a hangover while you're still drinking. Our straight-up favorite is original, but lemon/lime is the choice for mixing a truly different margarita. We toast your good health.

Akira

A good while back the Japanese entertained us with the cartoon adventures of *Speed Racer*, *Astroboy*, and *Gigantor*. Now there's a new wave of Japanese animation hitting American shores, and riding the crest of that tsunami is *Akira*. Based on the hit comic series by Katsuhiro Otomo, this full-length feature film is a wild postnuke sci-fi story with the coolest motorcycle chase scenes since *Hell's Angels on Wheels*. Catch it now on a limited-edition home video from Streamline Pictures, and grab the comic that started it all at your local comic shop.

Mountain Stage

Hosted by singer-songwriter Larry Groce (perhaps best known for his 1976 hit, "Junk Food Junkie"), Mountain Stage is a two-hour weekly radio performance show with a lot of class. Recorded live before an audience at the West Virginia Cultural Center in Charleston and distributed by American Public Radio, Mountain Stage features weekly musical regulars as well as guests such as R.E.M., Richard Thompson, Lyle Lovett, NRBQ, and Robert Fripp. This show proves that radio doesn't have to suck.

Compiled by Mark Blackwell, Johan Kugelberg, Jesse Obstbaum, and Lauren Spencer

☐ HEREDITY ☐ ENVIRONMENT ☐ JUBILAEUM

(CHOOSE ONE)

KEEP EVOLVING.

MISSED INFORMATION

Tad

Censor-round: On its way to London's Earache Records, the ultraviolent artwork for John Zorn's new jazz-grind band, Pain Killer, was confiscated by British Customs. Scotland Yard then raided the company offices and seized cassettes by Carcass, Cadaver, Filthy Christians, and artwork for an upcoming Fudge Tunnel album. Other Zorn news: The noisemeister has produced a new album for Mike (Faith No More) Patton's other band, Mr. Bungle. • **Sour Grapes of Rock:** A SPIN writer was taken off Guns N'Roses' guest list for their surprise San Francisco Warfield gig due to controversy surrounding SPIN's printing of the now-extinct press contract. When the band spied his name, it issued the dictum "Nobody from SPIN allowed." Meanwhile, the litigious rebels are suing WMMS-Cleveland for playing an advance bootleg of "Bad Apples" from the new album. • **Just Call Him Dick:** Richard Nixon said of former CNN-staffer Mary Alice Williams when visiting the news network's offices: "I don't generally like women in television, but she was pretty good." When a stunned reporter asked Nixon if he could be quoted, he responded with an unconcerned shrug. • **Not Bad Enough:** Michael Jackson is apparently going for street credibility on his next album. Rumors have it that he's approached the Jungle Brothers and L.L. Cool J, among others, for collaboration. Confidentially: People are complaining about the new Michael Jackson biography, but ever read Dave Marsh's? • **Cover Me:** As part of his Atlantic City show, Tom Jones covered Cinderella's "Shelter Me." Lead singer Tom Keifer's response: "It made my day—and I was having a really bad day." • **I'm a Rock Star, I Can Do Anything Dept.:** First Ice-T tackled acting (*New Jack City*), and now it's metal: His new band, Body Count, has signed to Sire and the Lollapalooza tour. Meanwhile, thrill-seeker Donny Osmond competed at the Long Beach, California, celebrity Grand Prix, and fat-assed TAD singer Tad Doyle planned to fling himself off a bridge attached to a bungee cord in late June. • **Guaranteed Overnight:** Confused by Michael Stipe's *Saturday Night Live* apparel? It was a homemade suit of Federal Express envelopes. • **Peter Criss Phony of the Month:** A drunken Peter Criss called the office the other morning to tell us about his new comeback album and life: "I'm divorcing my wife for another girl. Last night I smashed my Lamborghini. Hey man, you're talking to a legend." Only problem was it was yet another impostor of the cat-faced Kiss drummer. • **Believe It or Not:** An estimated .07 percent of American males can perform fellatio on themselves. Unrelated: The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles' *Coming Out of Their Shells* tour soundtrack, which was only sold through Pizza Hut stores, went triple platinum in 1990. And American corpses decompose slower than other nations' dead due to the high intake of preservatives in their diet. • **In the Studio:** Red Hot Chili Peppers, Metallica, Faith No More, Michael Penn, Digital Underground, Flavor Flav, Public Enemy, and Morrissey. **On the Road:** A 1991 version of Lynyrd Skynyrd will hit the road this summer with five original members and three new recruits that include Johnny Van Zant (brother of the late Ronnie Van Zant). The Clash of the Titans tour has already roared through half its American tour dates, with Anthrax, Megadeth, Slayer, and Alice in Chains at the helm. Look for them in your city, and don't forget the earplugs. Also a tour billed as Operation Rock'n'Roll with Alice Cooper, Judas Priest, Motörhead, Metal Church, and Dangerous Toys will be on the road until the end of August. • **People Who Died:** Steve Marriott, Johnny Thunders; novelist Jerzy Kosinski; and Dr. George Speri Sperti, the inventor of Preparation H. Also RIP: Brooklyn's L'Amour, the world-renowned heavy metal club, has shut its doors forever.

Ice, Ice, Maybe: After sending up M.C. Hammer as M.C. Household Tool in their 1989 video "The Gas Face," 3rd Bass has now enlisted Henry Rollins to get Vanilla Ice's goat. The brawny punker appears in the new "Pop Goes the Weasel" video as Vanilla Wafer. Other Ice Capades: In reference to Sir Mix-a-Lot's charges that Vanilla Ice lifted lyrics from Mix's 1986 song "I'm a Trip" in his book *Ice by Ice*, Elaine Schock, Ice's publicist, says, "The book never said that he [Ice] actually wrote it—it just said he *had* it."

You're Jingling, Baby: Thanks to the quality videos Portfolio Artists Management has done for C+C Music Factory ("Gonna Make You Sweat" and "Here We Go"), the group and the production company will be a major part of Coca-Cola's summer ad campaign. Also, Bud Lite is using the Ramones' "Blitzkrieg Bop."

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SCOTT POULSON-BRYANT on the road and on the couch with real rap's reluctant superstar.

the rebirth of cool

Round 1

L.L. Cool J is looking for a cue. The tour starts in four days and the eight female dancers need to dance in this section—the "Rebirth of L.L. Cool J" sequence—of the *Mama Said Knock You Out* tour. I light a cigarette (I feel like dancing) and watch L.L. check out his big ol' chorus line as "Jingling Baby" revs up again: "Uncle L,

Photographs by Anton Corbijn

Future of the Funk / Records are recorded minus all the junk." The large studio space, where Michael Bolton rasped through faux blues just yesterday, booms with the groove of L.L.'s comeback single, a hip hop classic of remixed, revitalized energy. "No, no. You have to start on *this* beat," L.L. says as Cut Creator halts the music. "Move on the eighth beat."

"That's hard to do," one of the dancers complains.

"No, it isn't. If I can rap it"—L.L. laughs—"then you can dance it."

He turns to me. "Scott, will you excuse us?"

I'm out of there.

Round 2

Where I come from, the *B* in B-boy stands for *banjy*, for the down-to-earth, streetwise pose cherished by black youth eager to stake a stylish claim on the world. And the most famous banjy boy in the world—James Todd Smith, a.k.a. L.L. Cool J—is now conducting auditions for his chorus line of around-the-way girls and jingling babies. After one woman leaves the room, pulling at her tights, giggling nervously—"It's him," her brown eyes flash—L.L. turns to the rest of the group and shakes his head. "I asked for dancers. Do I look like a dance teacher? Next . . ."

As the auditions continue, I flash back on my history with L.L. I knew I had to quit my post-college job at a PR firm when a very prominent music critic dismissed *Mama Said Knock You Out*, saying the slang wasn't "current" enough. I wasn't offended because L.L. was one of the clients I represented as a publicist; I was offended by the way the scribbler had casually tossed aside one of the most breathtaking and sensuous musicians to ever represent the spectacular visibility of American black-boy life. Here was one more person who wanted L.L. to be over, kaput, one of a long line of rappers to run out of metaphors and run out of steam. If hip hop was about *slang* to that writer, he obviously missed some of what was going on here.

Round 3

Just before we board the tour bus I'm sitting on one of the plush leather couches in the rehearsal studio. L.L. walks in and winks at me, reaching out as if to shake my hand. I take it and he yanks me up off the couch into the air. I land just in front of him, toe-to-toe. I gotta play it up, so I say, "Didn't know you were so strong."

"Thought I was weak?" he demands.

I gulp. Is this how he treats all journalists? I thought we were friends.

Round 4

He's 23 years old. He grew up in Queens, a much-maligned borough of New York which nonetheless is the hometown of numerous hip hop heavies. They say his early singles and first LP built Def Jam. He wrote and rapped the first hip hop love song, "I Need Love," a tune about male desire in a field usually devoted to male demands. He's been compared to a young Muhammad Ali: ambitious, sexy, confident, and ready to take all comers. He was crowned an African chief in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, way before most rappers boarded hip hop's Afrocentric bandwagon. He stepped out of a giant ghetto-blastin' radio as

Knockout: L.L. reclaims his title.

"I'm bringing God to the audience. I guess it's like, 'I'll screw you for eight hours straight, if you promise me you'll give your soul to God.'"

headliner of the '87 Def Jam Tour.

But:

He suffered a few slings and arrows in some very public feuds with the likes of Kool Moe Dee and Ice-T. He's been criticized for some shockingly satyric boasts (ponder: "I'm so bad I can suck my own dick"). He got booed at a Harlem rally for slain black teen Yusuf Hawkins for not being down with the political causes of the moment.

But:

He's the type of guy who makes women excited and men envious. He's the type of guy who makes *men* excited and *women* envious. He's a pop culture icon for the times, a sex god and a savior, bringing his positive-aggression style to bear with an enticing street-kid savoir faire. He's a star.

But he doesn't think so.

Round 5

My next encounter with L.L. is in the back of the tour bus as the front comes alive, mile by mile, filling with the sound of young black folks getting their lives. Valet Cornell Clark leads the off-key guys in an a cappella version of Luther Vandross's "A House Is Not a Home." Somebody solos: "Sayin' that you're still in love with meee . . ."

"She ain't in love with you cause you can't sing!" teases one of the female dancers. Soon, two women are harmonizing a Teena Marie ballad.

Between sets, L.L. and I talk.

"*Walking With a Panther* didn't do as well as expected, did it? And a lot of people dissed you for being arrogant. I thought it was some arrogant bullshit, personally, when I first heard it," I tell him.

L.L. does a TV-announcer voice: "I came up with a formula . . ." Long dramatic pause. ". . . that didn't work." He chuckles. "I admit I got into myself a little deep, fell victim to a musical self-centeredness. Some could deal with it, but a lot of people didn't like the vibe. By the same token," he continues, stretching his long legs into the aisle, "if nobody had been running around degrading my image or downgrading me, people would have looked at that album as something clever and witty with balls, instead of something arrogant or in-your-face cocky.

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"But things change," L.L. says, with a customary lick-of-the-lips. "I was trying to grow. I can't be mad at the public. And I thank God I got through that phase."

"Let's talk about your image—"

"I don't have an image."

"Of course you do—"

"I don't have an image. I never had one. Look at me, Scott. Think about *Radio* and what I'm wearing now." He points to his Harvard T-shirt and jeans and Chicago Bulls jacket.

"Your image is realness," I suggest.

"Then it wouldn't be an image, it would be real. Real isn't an image. An image is upfront, meant to be something, to mold someone. I never had one. If I did, *Panther* would have crushed me because there would have been something to expose. In other words, I'm not frontin'."

I propose to L.L. that hip hop sells realness. That's the image, the pose: around-the-way boys, homeboys . . .

"Some groups perpetrate realness but they ain't real, not being themselves. They're another person when you meet them backstage. I'm the same person on stage as I am here."

I tell him about Walking for Banjy Realness, the category in black gay social balls in which contestants don B-boy apparel, striving to become as "real" as their straight counterparts.

"I'm just me, all the time. I'm not into fronting," he insists.

"When we were fifteen, sixteen, Run-D.M.C. looked like us," I remind him. "Not like the Commodores or Cameo. The rappers were kids we'd go to school with—"

He starts to catch on. "They were easy to relate to. That was part of the success of rap. But having that reality and maintaining that are two different things. You have to do what you feel. Stay true to yourself. That'll make you successful."

"So do you think Madonna's real?" I ask him, hitting on a frequent touchstone of our conversations.

"Yeah, she's doing what she feels. That's why she changes so much. If she wasn't Madonna she'd probably be a woman who came to work everyday with a different hairdo."

I don't necessarily agree with him on the realness tip, but I'm starting to see where's he's coming from.

Round 6

I'm the shit. The answer. I'm good, better—actually, if you want to know the truth—the best.

Better yet, let L.L. say it: I explode, and my nine is easy to load. When I roll up, it's like hip hop vice. I excel, they all fell. I got a gold nameplate that says I wish you would. I'm the type of guy to ——— (fill in the hyperbolic metaphor of your choice).

The young black man has to soup himself up. He has to say, at least to himself, I'm bad. Because he knows that thinking any less leaves him, more often than not, wanting for a piece of the pie that someone else is baking and distributing. And that's the basis of rap: No matter how politically sophisticated or sonically experimental it becomes, no matter how progressive the slang becomes, rap will always be about young, black self-assurance. And L.L. Cool J knows that.

From jump, L.L. made a plea for the ordinary through the extraordinary use of his vocal cords, eroticizing and celebrating symbols of urban boyhood (the radio, the police siren, the jeep, the Kangol) and turning them into quintessential icons of authority and passion. Admitted or not, self-mythology was the aim of hip hop, and L.L. Cool J was the artist most successful at constructing a mythic space for himself, where he could tap into the realness of his existence and turn that realness into a larger-than-life, yet accessible folk culture gone electronic.

Round 7

You have to take your shoes off at Russell Simmons' house. I sit on the beige couch and stare at my Nikes as he winds up a phone conversation.

"Todd's like a sponge," says Def Jam's owner with characteristic bluntness. "He's one of the brightest and most learned artists there is. That's because he borrows—not steals—from successful artists and reinterprets. You heard a little Run-D.M.C. on *Radio*, the spare beats and stuff. There's a little Kane on songs like 'Mr. Good Bar.' That's what makes him current—he's abreast of what's successful. He's not necessarily a groundbreaking artist, but he's a commercial artist and we need that. We need people who take pop culture and decipher and redefine it. And he's one of the greatest vocalists in the world.

"Todd is a real black urban kid, the realest act I represent. All that stuff that went down after *Panther*, he was open-minded enough to take the criticisms and do something positive with it.

"He has a good grasp of his position in the marketplace. He can crossover but he's still concerned with black people, even if he talks the universal line. He wants around-the-way girls to buy his shit. That's what makes him accessible but still Black. He's honest."

Round 8

L.L. is eating a fried sea bass as the tour bus rolls along. The crew is still singing, the bus driver's lost, we've been on the road two hours, trying to find Philly.

L.L. explains that his acting debut in Michael J. Fox's straight-to-cable action-comedy *The Hard Way* was intended basically to expose him to a wider audience. "I'm not an actor," he stresses.

Yeah, right. L.L. Cool J has made some of the most interesting and compelling music videos ever, precisely because he is such a good actor. Pop video thrives on cliché, particularly when dealing with the shorthand and *slanguage* of hip hop culture. L.L., though, finds a way of making the clichés resonate by bringing a presence to the screen that is at once knowing and completely in the moment. As he maneuvers himself around the party-hearty revelers in the "Jingling Baby" clip, he commands space with authority. The artiness of "Goin' Back to Cali" compels him into a black-clad study of alienation and dislocation.

And what about the *Saturday Night Live* episode where he played Sean Penn's lover in a parody of *Fatal Attraction*? Funny, risky stuff. And whereas Big Daddy Kane, that other hip hop love man, needs Barry White to prop up his love jones on vinyl and video, L.L. Cool J pines through "I Need Love" on his own, with the lonesome look of a teen-macho manchild. L.L. Cool J knows how to manipulate hip hop's communal excess into streamlined declarations of independence. *That's* good acting.

Round 9

"You're a superstar." I say to him.

He shakes his head.

"You're a sex symbol."

"That's just a label. I'm not concentrating on that. I could get third-degree burns tomorrow and that would be all over with. I believe in the power of God, which makes me beautiful inside as well as out."

"Sure, and I put you, Madonna, and Prince in the same category insofar as striking a balance between the sacred and the profane," I offer. "Remember we saw Madonna's show? She was fucking one minute and praying the next. . . ."

"In my music and shows, I like to release the pressure, but at the same time mold the audience with God. I want my music to cultivate and stimulate some sort of spirituality. You're right, there is a fine line here."

"It's all about ecstasy, right? Orgasm . . ."

"Yeah, like orgasm, a release of energy. At the same time I'm bringing that physical pleasure—"

"Turning them on," I prod.

"—I'm bringing God to them, too. I guess it's like, 'I'll screw you for eight hours straight, if you promise me you'll give your soul to God.' "

He pauses, pondering the confessional tone of the conversation. "Actually, to be honest? If I'm feeling a little sexy and I get up and scratch my *cojones*, I write a jam about it. No deep philosophy to it. I was just being real analytical about it. I'm not really an analytical person."

At this point, Kristen, the only white dancer on the tour, wanders to the back of the bus and listens to L.L. and me talking. "What do you think of L.L. Cool J?" I ask her.

"I respect him. He doesn't dis women. Every rap record has at least one bitch-hoe song. L.L. has more substance. He uplifts women."

"How?"

"The right way, baby," L.L. says.

"Like, he has 'Jingling Baby,' which is a fun song."

"He also has 'Big Ole Butt,' " I say.

"But that's different. It's bringing out a part of her body. Celebrating it."

"It could have been 'Billy's Got Some Big Ole Nuts,' " L.L. interjects with a smile. "And a female could have made it. That would have been funny. Has there been a male group mad at Madonna yet with her men mermaids?"

"I think she thinks she was empowering gay men and playing around with issues of sexuality, poking fun at straight men. Should they have complained?"

"I guess not," allows L.L.

Round 10

As we pull into Philadelphia, we see a steel statue, a sturdy and abstract depiction of Benjamin Franklin's key, stunned by a lightning bolt. Soon we turn and we're driving down Race Street, through the middle of Chinatown. Two homeboys stand near the curb, and I wonder what they'd do if they knew L.L. Cool J was riding through their City of Brotherly Love.

" 'Cheesy Rat Blues' is about anyone who gets too big for their britches. It's not autobiographical, cause it never happened to me. But I'm not a star. I just make music. They're my supporters, the fans. They wanna dance to the music, I wanna make it. We all wanna take each other to that natural high. I want people to say, 'He has the ability to crush the world, but he don't hurt a fly.' "

Round 11

We get to the hotel. L.L.'s personal manager goes to the front desk to dole out scheduling and room keys. L.L. gets his first and quietly walks away. I watch him go up alone in the glass elevator.

Later, I knock on his door. He opens it, invites me in. "Are we alone?" I ask him.

He nods and sits on the couch, still in his Harvard T-shirt, wrapped in sheets and a comforter.

I flash back on one day when I was a publicist. L.L. noticed the hoop earring I wear and asked, "Aren't you afraid someone's gonna think you're gay?" "No, I'm not." I told him. He just looked at me. "That's cool," he said. "That's cool."

So now I ask him about homophobia in rap.

"Look, I respect all people. As long as people get their work done, they can deal with whoever they want to."

"You deal with women in a really romantic way," I suggest. "As opposed to, say, Brand Nubian who are quote unquote righteous and for the people, but dog women out."

"If I'm feeling a little sexy and I get up and scratch my *cojones*, I write a jam about it. No deep philosophy to it."

"Every person deals with things differently. You know that. Some car dealers deal their cars differently."

"Interesting metaphor, Todd."

He laughs. "Or some men, whatever—you have to give people respect."

I suggest that hip hop has elements of male insecurity behind all the braggadocio.

"If someone says, 'I would never do "I Need Love," ' well why not? You insecure about something? You definitely need love. That's fear, if not straight-out insecurity.

"A lot of these guys who dog women out in records are mad cause they didn't get any women before they made records. Now they got a chance to disrespect all the women who they thought dissed them. If they get themselves together, maybe they can make records complimenting women. Or maybe they can get some women."

"You excited about the tour?"

"Oh, yeah. Originally, I wanted to do a club tour, get intimate with the crowd."

"Kind of like take hip hop back to the roots?"

He shakes his head. "I'm not into that 'It started here, let's keep it here' stuff, I just wanted to have fun. McDonald's started in one place—why can't they sell burgers everywhere, knowhumsayin'?"

"Another interesting metaphor, Todd."

He laughs again.

"This tour is the beginning of the making of a legend. Like Ali, but way bigger. Boxing is the only sport that shows true aggression. Truly a display of everyman's ego."

"Like rapping."

"But it's not the ego of hip hop that makes it threatening. It's the groove."

"So, it's not the sight or sound of a young black man talking about himself and how bad he is?"

"It's the groove," he insists. " 'I'm bad, I'm really bad' [*in harmless pop crooner voice*] versus 'I'm bad!!!' Two different things."

"Speaking of the groove, Max Roach called your music the most African of hip hop."

"He said that about my music?! Interesting, maybe subconsciously I'm tapping into something from back in the day. I'm proud of being black. When I went to the Ivory Coast, I felt like I'd been there before."

Suddenly he states: "I want to be legendary. I want to reach the Golden Microphone."

"What is that?"

"The ultimate in success. Michael Jackson's there. Madonna. Prince is almost there. I'm not even halfway there in terms of sales, respect . . ."

"So what does it take to be a legend?"

"Good music and the power of God."

Round 12

He's six feet two. He's now 201 pounds, having lost 15 pounds for the tour. He swears he doesn't work out; I guess he has one of those natural black male bodies. He finally started dancing in his act after people asked him why he didn't.

He writes and records sinewy songs of day-to-day life like "Illegal Search" and "Boomin' System," shaping the B-boy into an identifiable and influential image across the world—but he says he's not political. He commands the stage and screen with a communicative mastery of movement and expression—but he says he's not an actor. He causes women to faint at his concerts and men to adopt his street-tough style—but he says he's not a star. In his resistance to the imposition of labels, while defining *himself* with the best boast raps around, he is a typical young black man negotiating the ins and outs of self-representation. Ultimately, he says, he's not at the forefront of rap. "I'm at the forefront of being me. I don't think of any of this as a competition. I just want my airtime. To show the world who I am."

"Who are you?"

"The seed of David. A person who's the rightful heir to Solomon's knowledge," he says, pointing to his hat, which, at this late, late hour, as he's snuggled up in bedsheets, is still on his head.

"Why do you wear the hat? I always thought maybe you had an ugly head or a bad haircut."

"First of all, it's my trademark. Secondly, all your energy is contained in your head. You notice, in a lot of religions, holy men wear things on their heads. It's my crown." Then he starts to laugh. "Nobody worries about what my balls look like. Nobody asks me about my feet. Michael Jackson has his glove. I have my hats. Why can't we just leave it at that?"

"Because you're already a legend, Todd."

"Yeah, you're right. The world will never see such a display of power after my career is over. I'm gonna sandblast the universe." He flashes that charming Cool J smile, but I know he means it. "I've wanted to rap since I was nine years old. Since I was a little boy, running around in my Superman pajamas with a towel hanging out the back of my shirt."

"You're still kind of doing that, right?"

"If I had some kind of wild fantasy with a female, I might, but other than that, nah," he shrugs.

"You're kind of Superman. Ordinary guy by day, bigger-than-life hero by night."

He thinks about this. "Yeah, maybe. But ain't no kryptonite here." @

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JOHN McCREADY probes the northern soul of Electronic, the first English supergroup of the '90s.

GETTING AWAY WITH IT

A Top 40 debut single with sales of 275,000 plus; a debut performance at L.A.'s Dodger Stadium supporting Depeche Mode in front of 30,000 people. Impressive numbers. It's a wonder it hasn't all gone to their heads. But Bernard Sumner and Johnny Marr of Electronic are old hands. The former was a member of Joy Division and the subsequent New Order; Marr made the Smiths worth listening to, a charming man wielding six magical strings while the singer fiddled with the batteries in his hearing aid.

I meet Sumner and Marr at the offices of Factory Records, the hyper-successful, design-crazed independent label that is home to Electronic. It's a glorious day in Manchester and Sumner is in good humor as we head for a photo op at the Hacienda, the club he co-owns with the Factory organization and the other members of New Order. Currently getting new decor for a new decade, the Hacienda has been as much a catalyst for the members of Electronic as it has for other locals like Happy Mondays and the Stone Roses.

When the Hacienda opened in the early '80s, all the Manchester groups would hang out there, the black music of America seeping into their rock-addled consciousness. You were as likely to hear Soul Sonic Force or James Brown as you were Magazine or the Buzzcocks, and this is essentially the crossover that informs Manchester's uniquely footloose rock'n'roll and the media creation that was "Madchester." You can hear this musical miscegenation in Electronic's debut, an album full of songs that want to knock you out and get you up all at the same time.

Sumner will stress, though, that Electronic is a reflection of where the group's members live rather than what they listen to. Marr points out that the comparatively easy pace of Manchester allows them to enjoy what they do and the money they generate. "I really like having some balance in my life. I like being able to drive my car and just see the city. Go shopping, have a drink, and stay in bed until four o'clock—all those really important things. When you start out you just want to make money and escape. Now I want to come back to earth.

"You see, when we came together, one of the things we had in common, apart from enjoying a drink or three, was that we were missing aspects of our normal lives."

So the good life is your first priority?

"The first priority is paying the fucking mortgage, mate," Sumner says with a grin. "You've got to make sure you have enough to live the way you want to, where you want to. But it's not as if things are about to go wrong. If someone says we can make a hundred thousand on tour, we're not impressed. We'd

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PHOTO BY BART EVERLY

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HEART OF DARKNESS

Pere Ubu remains one of the most influential, innovative groups to emerge from the mid-'70s American punk–new wave movement. JON SAVAGE listens to some pearls of wisdom.

ON ITS MOST RECENT THREE albums—*The Tenement Year*, *Cloudland*, and the new *Worlds in Collision*—Pere Ubu has mapped out an emotional landscape of America: a land full of natural wonders marred by random human absurdities. As the band says on *Cloudland*'s "Flat," "In the early part of the twentieth century, deep inside the American wilderness, in the state of Kansas, eighty-two thousand square miles of flat, there were two automobile cars. On July 5, 1904, they ran into each another. Hey ho! What do we know!"

"I think America is a very sad thing now," says Ubu singer and cowriter David Thomas. "It's obvious that the very specific original dream, that dream of democracy, is a bankrupt ideal. The transcendentals of the 1830s, Thoreau and Emerson, had such a strong, wonderful idealistic vision of America. People were building octagonal houses to catch all the sun's rays, all this eccentric let's-build-the-future thing that died some time ago.

"It's sad when the corpse is totally rotten, that there can't be any more illusions now that it's all gone—an innocent dream ripped up and discredited. But I'm an American, and there's still a lot of stuff there that I like. As a land, it's awesome. I tend to see the land as opposed to the people and the culture and the government and the economic system sitting on top of it."

The members of Pere Ubu are prophets without honor in their own country—they've paid the price for being true innovators. Beginning in 1975, they were one of a handful of groups who kick-started the aesthetic that became known worldwide as punk/new wave. After a hiatus during the '80s, they are still making important records; men of early middle age in an industry that values youth, a great American group which has been nurtured by the English wing of its record company.

Pere Ubu was initially rooted in a Cleveland apartment block called the Plaza. "It was a really nice old building in a terrible neighborhood," says David Thomas. "We were into this urban pioneer thing, which was a bunch of kids born in the suburbs moving back into the city, because they thought the city should live. The city I loved everybody else hated: It was totally deserted, people fled when the sun went down. We thought it was beautiful in a time of youth when you're prone to Romanticism.

"I wondered at what point a civilization hits its peak and then begins to decline. All those deserted cities, the jungle overgrows them: At what point does the city die? At what point do the people who live there no longer understand the vision of the builders? We felt that we owned Cleveland at that point because nobody else wanted it. But that's all gone now. The city has become revitalized."

THE SIX SONGS ON THE FIRST three Ubu singles are among the best ever recorded: Released on the group's own independent Hearthan (later Hearpen) label (and now collected on the Rough Trade U.K. compilation *Terminal Tower*, named after the Cleveland landmark), "Heart of Darkness," "Final Solution," and "Street Waves" surfed through a dreamscape of industrial decay.

Pere Ubu celebrated its environment with a sense of wonder. "We wrote a lot about driving around in the Flats in songs like 'Street Waves,' " Thomas says. "We understood the relation of sound to vision. You'd go by the steel mills and there was this very powerful electrical feeling, combined with a particular sound in the air that conjured up a whole set of visions with it. The original idea was to make sound stimulate the imagination: We always saw what we did in very visual terms."

These early records featured two important innovations which have influenced numerous groups since. First off, Pere Ubu, as Thomas says, "transposed the guitar and bass functions," making the bass carry the melody and the guitar the rhythm. This would have an enormous impact on groups such as Joy Division and New Order. Secondly, synth player Allen Ravenstine used his instrument in what was then a new way: not to simulate the sound of existing instruments but to create electric, otherworldly textures that blasted through Ubu songs like the wind off the Flats.

YOU HAVE TO REMEMBER that the urban pioneer movement was the context of what we were doing then," says Thomas. "A lot of us loved the city because we appreciated the almost naive vision of the people who had built it. Clearly we were dark at that point but no more dark than country and western music, for instance. "Heart of Darkness" was describing a certain bend in the freeway: We saw all that in the city, but it wasn't that we embraced it. It was more

PHOTO BY NICK VACCARRO

journalistic."

"Chinese Radiation," a song on the group's first LP, *The Modern Dance*, was the first sign of a more "optimistic" approach. During the year that that record was released, Pere Ubu produced another fine album, *Dub Housing*, and relocated to England. Implicit in this and the more abstract LPs that followed (*New Picnic Time*, *Art of Walking*, and *Songs for the Bailing Man*) was a rejection of a style that Ubu had helped to create, which after 1977 had become "new wave."

"We never felt part of any of that stuff," says Thomas. "I've said before that I thought that the new wave movement is the worst thing that ever happened to music in America—it wiped out a generation of musicians. All the interesting groups that came out of that period, like Devo and Talking Heads, had been working prior to that window of 1977, in isolation and without any hope of commercial success. These were important things."

Like John Lydon/Johnny Rotten, the guys in Pere Ubu set themselves an almost impossible task by rejecting their own history and mythology. After *Dub Housing*, as Thomas says, "things started to whack out. We used to throw everything on, and if one idea was good, three ideas were better. And if you could cram eight ideas into a second of time . . . " After Pere Ubu split in 1982, Thomas pursued his interest in biology and musical improvisation in albums with the Wooden Birds.

Yet in common with many people who lived through punk/new wave, there was this sense of unfinished business. "There was a sense that we

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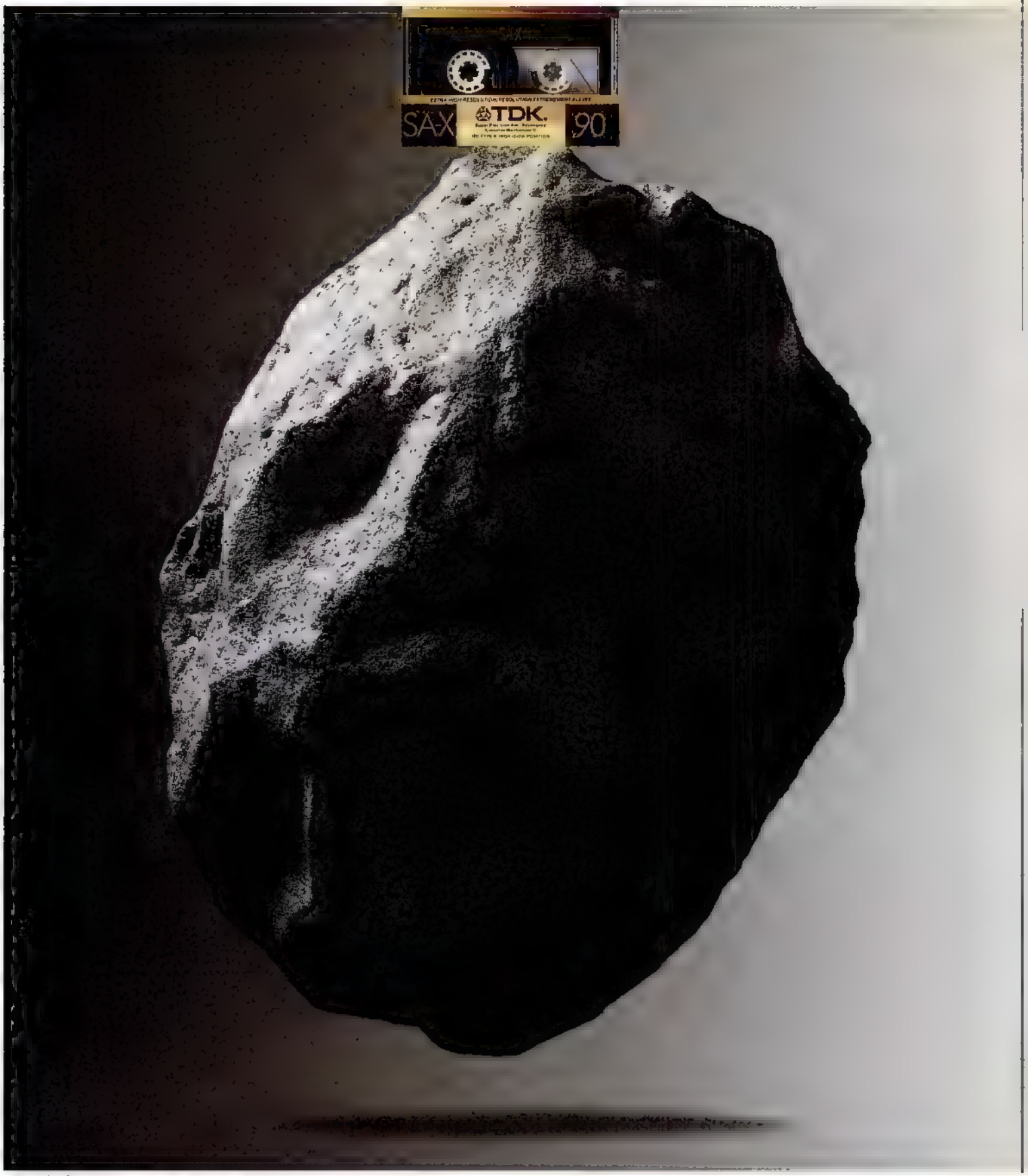
Pere Ubu, *from left:* Jim Jones, Eric Feldman, Scott Kraus, Tony Maimone, and David Thomas.



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REALITY CHECK

TWO MEMBERS OF FISHBONE HAVE JOINED ME FOR LUNCH AT AN *authentic* New York deli (big sandwiches; rude attitude) in L.A.'s trendy Century City. Guitarist Kendall Jones has brought along one of those miniature bullhorn toys that comically distort your voice, and he hasn't exactly been shy about using it during our trek to the restaurant. Trombonist-keyboardist Chris Dowd, meanwhile, has already had a hilarious "conversation" with a photo of Mariah Carey that adorns one of the walls in Columbia Records' publicity department. The band is well-known for its onstage antics, which include a look straight out of the George Clinton Dress-for-Success manual, and its crazy riffs'n'rhythms that drive predominantly white punk fans to diving and slamming to every note and hyperkinetic move. But the thing is . . .

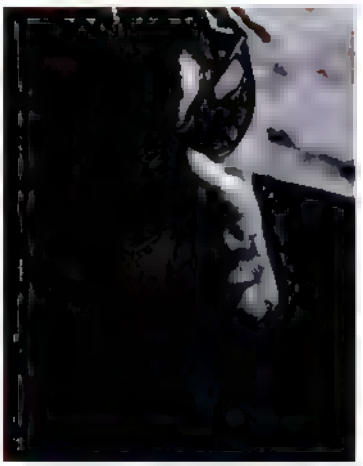
Fishbone is rocking the house as hard as it always has, and the rest of the world is finally listening—between stage dives that is. BILL HOLDSHIP finds out what time it is from the veterans of the scene.

"We're not *just* zany!" says Chris. "Everybody's so into the acrobatics of the live shows. They go, 'Oh, yeah, those are some wild and crazy black people that play rock'n'roll! What a great party band!' But if people would follow us lyrically, they'd understand us a lot better. The lyrics evoke thought, and they always have from our first records on. But the old Columbia Records powers, who are now gone, wanted us to be, like[*in a TV announcer's fake voice*], 'Hey! It's those crazy new wave Negroes from South Central Los Angeles!' "

"Mammy!" exclaims Kendall, delivering his best Al Jolson.

"But then Columbia let us know that things were going to change," adds Chris.

And with the release of the band's new LP, *The Reality of My Sur-*



Fishing for funk, *from top*: vocalist Angelo Moore, guitarist Kendall Jones. Looking up, *clockwise from lower left*: Phillip "Fish" Fisher, Kendall Ray Jones, Angelo Moore, Christopher Dowd, Walter Adam Kibby II, John Bigham, and John Norwood Fisher.

PHOTOS BY STEPHEN DANELIAN

roundings, its first in more than three years, Columbia seems to be behind Fishbone as never before. After all, not many bands make it to *Saturday Night Live* an entire month before their new album is even released. It's almost as though, with the success of bands like Faith No More, the Red Hot Chili Peppers, and Jane's Addiction, someone in the company suddenly said, Hey, maybe we haven't been marketing these guys right!

In the band's 13 years together, Fishbone has managed to blend every pop sound its members absorbed as youngsters into a unique musical stew. "We don't want to be categorized, and our label understands that now," explains Chris. "So the doors are finally wide open. Besides, wasn't Stevie Wonder's *Songs in the Key of Life* a rock'n'roll album?" The question seems almost rhetorical. "Wasn't Marvin Gaye's *Let's Get It On*?"

"Actually, that was punk rock!" adds Kendall.

"It *was* punk rock," continues Chris. "It was progressive music, pointing fingers, making blatant statements about our society. And that's what Fishbone is. But I'm as influenced by Marvin Gaye as I was by the Sex Pistols. Or as much as I am listening to something by Paganini. We're supposedly living in an age where intelligence should prevail, and people *should* be able to draw their own conclusions."

"*Should*, Chris," emphasizes Kendall. "That's the operative word here."

Fishbone—in the best '60s tradition—still view their music as a form of direct communication; that is, a vehicle to say things that need to be said. Both men point to the new album as a "concept" piece. ("We originally wanted it to be a play, like *Tommy*," says Chris.) And "Fight the Youth," the kickoff track, addresses ignorance and the lack of intelligence, knowledge, and education in America that apparently drives these dudes batty.

"People are apathetic," says Kendall. "They don't care about each other, so why should they care about what you're saying in your music? It's like premature ejaculation. You want to come, but you don't care if anyone else gets off. And people might say, 'If you're so serious, how come you don't walk up and down the stage, grab your dick, and talk politics all night?' Well, there are different ways to address things, and we *do* address those things live, but we're not . . . "

At this moment, one of those stereotypical Hollywood bimbettes with a miniskirt up to her thighs walks into our section of the deli. "*Goddamn!*" laughs Kendall. "See! Now that's what I mean! I can appreciate that! You're allowed to have fun. You don't have to suck the marrow out of it with the politics. We know what we're up against. We know when to fight. We know when to have fun. Fortunately, we can do both."

In the band's 13 years together, Fishbone has managed to blend every pop sound its members absorbed as youngsters into a unique musical stew.

Pensive times, *from top*: John Bigham, guitars and keyboards; Christopher Dowd, trombones and keyboards; John Norwood Fisher, bassist, check out their surroundings.

Part of the ignorance this band is talking about (and perhaps another big reason that Columbia is behind them so strongly) would include the Living Colour comparisons that are now coming its way, simply because they're black musicians who play rock music. (Ironically, Living Colour was early in its career frequently compared to Fishbone.)

A conversation as to why this schism originated between blacks, whites, and rock'n'roll leads us into the inevitable Elvis issue. It's almost the exact same debate I had with Vernon Reid a half a year ago—although Kendall is *militant* in his anti-Presley stance. "Fuck him! Fuck Elvis straight up!" he says at least twice, also citing as deserving of black scorn Pat Boone, Ricky Nelson, the Stones, Led Zeppelin, Elvis Costello, Vanilla Ice, and especially Axl Rose ("He represents everything America is about—an uneducated dummy!"). Chris is a little less militant in his beliefs ("I grew up in the South, so I understand certain aspects of it, although I think he was still a racist"). But since I believe that Elvis was perhaps less racist than 99 percent of the people living in America in 1955—*especially* in the Deep South—we all end up agreeing to disagree.

"As far as I'm concerned," says Chris, "black culture is the only culture in America that exists. Black people have contributed so much to this country, and there hasn't been credit given where credit is due."

"In architecture. In music. In agriculture. In medicine," Kendall says. "The first blood transfusion. Dr. Charles Drew. And he died because he couldn't get one himself. These people don't get credit, but a lot of it's because education in this country is so light in the ass. Keep everyone ignorant because the system works better that way."

One thing the Fishbone musicians certainly aren't ignorant of is musical roots, and this has perhaps never been more evident than on the new LP's terrific "Everyday Sunshine," which sounds like nothing so much as a '90s take on Sly and the Family Stone. But Chris—the song's composer—says a Sly tribute wasn't his original intention.

"When I first started it, it was this real bluesy, gospel thing," he explains. "But, of course, I'm influenced by Sly Stone. I mean, what black youth growing up in the ghetto

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PHOTOS BY STEPHEN DANELIAN

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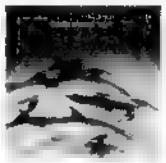

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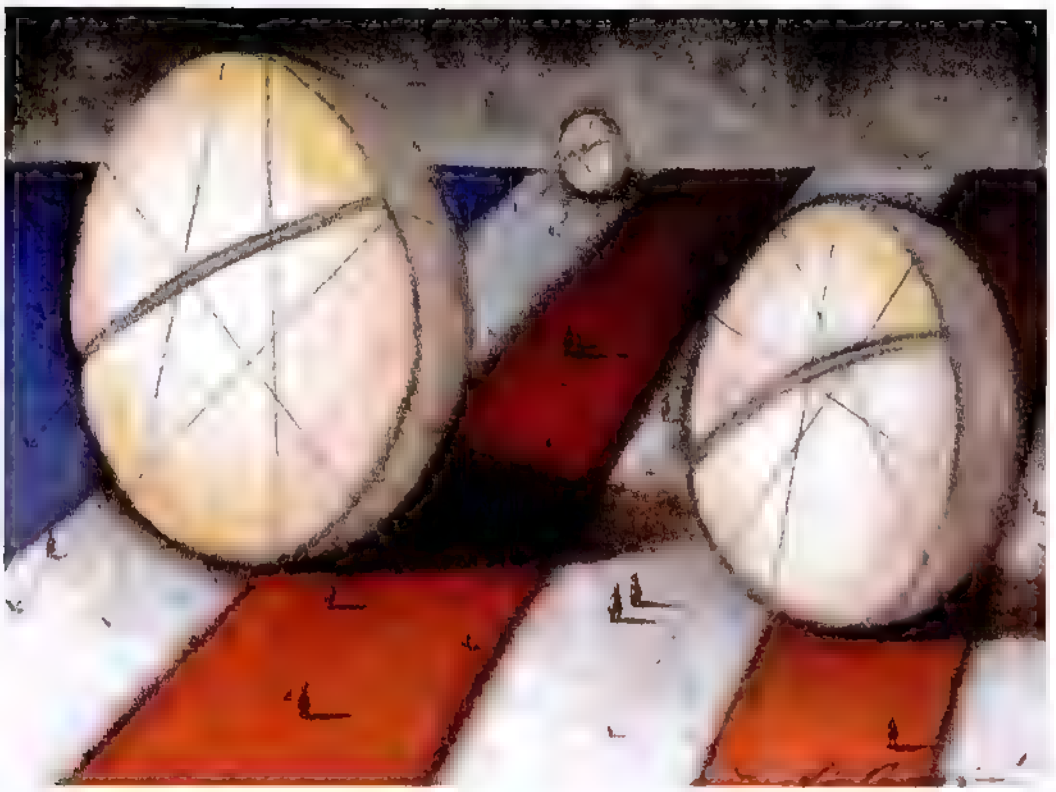


RU-486, the French abortion pill, will take abortion out of the clinics and put it in the hands of women and their doctors—whether pro-lifers like it or not. STACI BONNER reports.

Paris, France, October 1988—

"I'm sure," she said.

"Okay," said her gynecologist. "Take these three tablets and within two days you'll get contractions. You'll feel like your period is coming, and that's what is actually happening: Your uterus will expel the fertilized egg. After forty-eight hours, you'll need to come back and get an injection of prostaglandin, which will help the process along. If you feel more than mild discomfort, let me know right away. That's not supposed to happen."

It wasn't easy. She held the three white pills in her palm and pretended they were aspirin. And then she swallowed them. The first day nothing happened. On the second day the cramps started. The doctor was right—it felt just like menstrual cramps. When her period came, it was just a bit heavier than usual. The fertilized egg dislodged from her uterine lining. She wasn't pregnant anymore.

FOR ALMOST THREE YEARS GYNECOLOGISTS IN France have been using RU-486, the controversial "abortion pill," to terminate pregnancies of seven weeks or less. The story of RU-486 in America is very different, and reveals a culture apparently afraid to let women control their bodies. Despite worldwide support, a vocal minority of Americans has succeeded, for the moment, in confining the breakthrough drug to France.

RU-486 is a simple steroid hormone which, if used correctly, reduces an early pregnancy to something resembling a heavy menstrual period. Etienne-Emile Baulieu, an award-winning French biochemist, began researching potential chemical abortifacients in the 1970s, and in 1975 synthesized the substance we know as RU-486. Since French approval of the drug in October 1988, Baulieu has become its foremost advocate. "Nobody likes abortion," he says, "but it is a fact of life."

The reputation of both the scientist and his pill are impeccable. Baulieu won the prestigious Albert Lasker Award for his discovery, and the results of RU-486's use have been excellent: 65,000 French women have used it with a near 100 percent success rate. In a very few cases—about 1 percent—surgical abortions have been necessary to complete the procedure.

But from the day RU-486 was released to the public in France, its medical value has been obstructed by antichoice groups. Patent holder Groupe Roussel Uclaf has exclusive control of the discovery, but has regularly caved in to threats from antiabortion groups, mainly in the U.S. These groups made it clear that if Roussel Uclaf sold the drug to any other country the company would become the target of a massive boycott of their other products. Threatening letters were sent from fictional companies fronting for abortion foes. Some Roussel executives were threatened with physical harm.

The company didn't know what to make of the uproar over what it perceived as a mere medication, but shelved the drug nonetheless. France's Minister of Health Claude Evin issued a statement calling RU-486 "the moral property of women" and forced Roussel Uclaf to remarket the drug in France. That's the only place it's been available for the past three years.

Yet there is huge international demand for RU-486, particularly in third world countries with the most serious overpopulation problems. Supporters argue the drug could also save the lives of women in those countries. Botched abortions and resulting complications account for 200,000 deaths in developing countries each year, according to the World Health Organization.

The Reproductive Health Unit of the WHO is now the key to distribution of RU-486 in third-world nations. They've agreed in principle to inde-

ILLUSTRATION BY JAMES ROZZINI

pendently research and perhaps sponsor the drug, but haven't so far. Once they do, Roussel promises to deliver the drug to any country that asks for it.

Insiders say the WHO is holding back for fear their funding will be cut. "There are rumors that the United States has put pressure on them," says Baulieu. "The Reagan policy, followed by Bush's, has been that any organization doing work with abortion cannot receive money, even for things other than abortion."

IN FRANCE, ABOUT ONE ABORTION IN THREE IS now done with RU-486. Baulieu hopes the potential market in the U.S. will help persuade Roussel Uclaf to begin distributing the pills outside France. Every year, 1.6 million American women have surgical abortions in public clinics, many of whom would probably opt for RU-486 if they had the choice. Abortion clinics, the doctors who work there and women who enter, are all easy targets for protests, picketers and bombs, but RU-486 would change that forever. Abortion no longer has to be a public matter; it would be a private procedure in the hands of the women themselves.

That's exactly what scares antiabortion groups. They feel the pill blurs the line between contraception and abortion. Ironically, Baulieu acknowledges this distinction, calling his pill a *contragestive* because it stops gestation. He doesn't see any reason to make abortion a moral issue. "In one of the world's most developed countries, women should have access to medical technology," Baulieu says.

While our Supreme Court erodes the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision that guarantees every woman the right to abortion, RU-486 is a new biotechnology that threatens to make the decision irrelevant.

"I don't think the courts will overturn the right to abortion," says Sarah Weddington, defender of Roe. "They'll just fill it full of holes." The June 1989 Webster decision allowed states to restrict abortion. Utah is currently testing the boundaries of this ruling by moving towards making abortion illegal.

"History has shown that when abortions are illegal and woman want and need them, they find a way to have them," says Marie Bass of the Reproductive Health Technologies Project, a public education campaign for RU-486. The pill, in the hands of private physicians, would be an alternative to back-alley abortions. This is the closest medical science has come to a safe, do-it-yourself method.

Equally dramatic are the other indications of the drug. RU-486 shows promise where a whole host of maladies are concerned, including breast cancer, brain tumors, and glaucoma. The pill may also help to induce labor, eliminating the need for many cesarean deliveries. And Sweden is currently testing the pill as a once-a-month contraceptive.

NO MEDICAL TREATMENT IS ENTIRELY RISK-free, and RU-486 is no exception. A heavy smoker in her 13th pregnancy recently died from cardiovascular complications following the Nalador prostaglandin injection which is used in conjunction with RU-486. Baulieu says this kind of prostaglandin wasn't really appropriate for the woman, and has already produced an alternative called Cytotec. "It's given orally, so it enters the bloodstream more slowly than the injection," he explains.

"Some people tried to use this as a weapon, but overall, people were very attentive to the progress we've made," says Baulieu. "Complications from abortions are rare. But it's much worse when abortions are conducted in a clandestine way."

"I believe the key to the future of RU-486 lies in the United States," Baulieu says. He is confident the pill will eventually be approved and used in this country. "Women want it. Physicians and scientists want it. The future depends on American women. And American women are very strong."

The drug has strong support in this country. The American Medical Association, representing 290,000 doctors, passed a resolution supporting research on RU-486. Roussel Uclaf has been deluged with over 200,000 petitions from scientists, doctors, and American women insisting it be made available.

Even the mayor of New York is getting involved. David Dinkins is one of RU-486's strongest advocates. He is organizing a "coalition of pro choice mayors," sending off pro-RU-486 letters to Roussel-Uclaf and President Bush. "American women should be entitled to the same reproductive rights as French women," Dinkins insists.

Despite worldwide support, a vocal minority of Americans has succeeded, for the moment, in confining the breakthrough drug RU-486 to France.

But despite the outpouring of support from influential parties, a vocal minority has managed to get its way. A group of senators, including Jesse Helms, sent off a letter to the FDA in June 1989 urging a ban on the drug, warning of "an imminent danger to the health of women." Nineteen days later, a Personal Import Ban went into effect, which still stands. No one can import RU-486, not even researchers.

Oregon Congressman Ron Wyden has introduced a bill to lift this ban. "It was a case of the FDA succumbing to the Right to Life members of Congress," says a Wyden spokesperson. "We reviewed the documents, and were unable to find evidence of a black market or any threat to health. This is the only official statement the United States has issued to Roussel Uclaf. The message we're sending is, 'The deck is loaded. If you dare to market the drug here, you'll be clobbered.' "

But there is a loophole. If the FDA won't lift the ban, the state of California can still test the drug. AIDS activists forced the California Drug Law into being, a reaction to FDA heel-dragging on the testing of AIDS drugs. California can now bypass the FDA approval process. As a result several AIDS medications were made available to researchers. The same could well happen to RU-486.

"I feel very frustrated that we don't have RU-486 for our patients," says Dr. Bernard Gore, a San Francisco gynecologist and potential RU-486 researcher. "We need to go through this charade, reinvent the wheel so to speak, and do yet another study to please the FDA." Once the pill is tested and approved in California, FDA approval for all states could be right around the corner.

"By this time next year, RU-486 will be legally available to doctors in California, I promise you," says Every Child A Wanted Child's Paul Kangas. The San Francisco group has created its own company to market RU-486 after testing is completed, to produce a domino effect. "Doctors in other states will see they are losing clients, because California will have RU-486 to prescribe."

At that point, the antiabortion groups will have lost. "The pill will decentralize abortion," promises Kangas. "Instead of one clinic to bomb, they'll have a hundred doctors in each town to deal with."

UNTIL ROUSSEL UCLAF BENDS, THE FATE OF RU-486 remains at a standstill. Some women aren't willing to wait another year. Kangas, who organized an underground railroad for safe abortions in the 60s, says the same thing is happening with RU-486. "I know gynecologists who have flown to France and gotten pills from doctors there for their clients," he says. "Women write to me asking for RU-486. I tell them to call gynecologists in Martinique, Mexico, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. You'll find gynecologists there who will try to arrange it. It's a business opportunity."

Another drastic option, Kangas says, is to ignore the patent and make your own pill. That happened when the French company cut off the supply of RU-486 to China and the Chinese made an identical product. "I think anyone in a second-year college chemistry class could make a duplicate of this pill," says Kangas. "It's just a simple steroid."

Even the pill's strongest supporters warn against this kind of black market. "It would be a tragedy," warns Every Child's cofounder Carol Ruth Silver. "The chances of it being adulterated or used improperly, or even just sold at exorbitant prices so that people will do desperate things in order to obtain it, are great."

Advocates of an RU-486 underground draw from the history of contraception in America. "The original birth control pill wasn't allowed in this country," says Kangas. "Margaret Sanger [who founded Planned Parenthood 75 years ago] hired a chemist to manufacture it and sold it out of her home. She was willing to go to jail for her beliefs, but instead of arresting her, the government authorized a regular drug manufacturer, Searle, to distribute the pill in 1960. She showed people how simple it was."

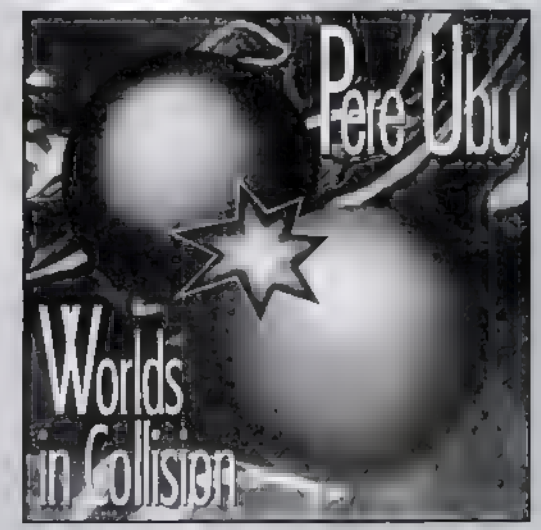
After much debate, Roussel Uclaf has decided to

continued on page 88

PERE UBU is back with a new album, "WORLDS IN COLLISION"

IN STORES MAY 21

It's **memorable,** it's **hummable,** it's **danceable,**



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sometimes it's **scary,** but it's **always uncanny.**

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A SPY IN THE HOUSE OF LOVE

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IN STORES JUNE 11

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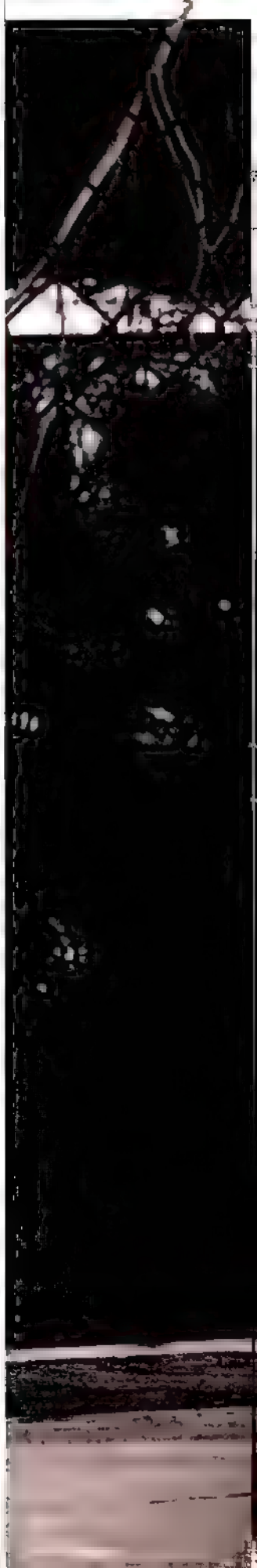
SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Frank Zappa is going to run for President. BOB GUCCIONE, JR., reads his lips.

THE IMAGE OF FRANK ZAPPA AS A MAD scientist has, like a stubborn vine, so entwined itself through the garden of rock'n'roll mythology that its origin is completely indiscernible. But when I meet him in the dark living room that appears to be the center of the Zappa universe, he is dressed in a T-shirt and beach pants, and his long gray-streaked hair and moustache accentuate the intensity of his eyes and he looks more like a wizard in exile.

His most famous song is "Don't Eat the Yellow Snow," released back when the '70s still had credibility, and the most familiar Zappa record isn't even his, it's his daughter Moon Unit's ▶



Photographs by Anton Corbijn

"Valley Girl," which he collaborated on. Yet a generation that not only didn't grow up on his music but were mostly not even born when he first became popular has accepted his place of prominence. Like an ambassador, he means something, stands for something strong and resolute, but this generation is not really sure how and exactly why.

In his 25-year career as a recording artist, he has released 50 records: As of this writing, which is to say this morning—I can't vouch that he won't issue something later today. He has created almost every type of music from rock'n'roll to classical. Hardly a staple on MTV, the image of a conservatively suited Zappa testifying before the Senate at the infamous "Porn Rock" hearings in 1985 is his thumbprint on video culture: a soundbite from a sound banquet.

He speaks in a deep voice and with intellectual precision articulates his world view, which is dark, passionate, and finally optimistic.

SPIN: Is education really out of reach now in this country? Are we twenty years away, a whole generation away, from repairing education in this country?

Zappa: No, we're further than that. Because in a way, I would agree with George Bush in that education in America needs to be reinvented, but certainly not in the way he would imagine it. Because the biggest problem we're facing right now is that education needs to be imparted to a postliterate generation. People who have no feeling whatsoever for a book or any data on a printed page, which should be worrisome to anyone who publishes a magazine.

SPIN: It is.

Zappa: And if you have to teach people basic things that they will need in order to function normally, forget about achieving greatness, or even competing with Japan and Germany. Just to function, how are you going to do it if people can't read, refuse to read, and are so adapted to receiving data from optical and audio sources. I think you have to meet them halfway and install equipment into classrooms that are going to be able to deliver data into the language that the kids already understand. Costs money. And when you've got a state like California, with such a huge educational system willing to take up the twelve billion dollar deficit out of the schools, it also tells you something about the parents that would allow that to happen. Because obviously the parents don't give a fuck, 'cause they didn't enjoy school that much themselves. And giving the choice between paying more taxes and just hoping that it gets better and letting the "education President" take care of it, I mean, everybody is sticking their head in the sand.

SPIN: Do you think somewhere along the line, it serves the powers that be, the pervading government for the last ten years, to have education dilapidate to where people don't think enough to really challenge?

Zappa: No question. I don't think it's any accident that the educational system in America has been brought to its current state. Because only a totally uneducated mass of people will be baffled by balloons. And yellow ribbons and little flags and buzz words and guys saying "new world order" and shit like that, I mean, only a person who has been dissuaded from any kind of critical thinking and doesn't know geography, doesn't know the English language—I mean if you can't speak English, then this stuff works on you.

One of the things that was taken out of the curriculum was civics. Civics was a class that used to be required before you could graduate from high school. You were taught what was in the U.S. Constitution. And after all the student rebellions in the '60s, civics was banished from the student curriculum and was replaced by something called social studies. Here we live in a country that has a fabulous constitution and all these guarantees, a contract between the citizens and the government—nobody knows what's in it. It's one of the best kept secrets. And so, if you don't know what your rights are, how can you stand up for them? And furthermore, if you don't know what is in that document, how can you care if someone is shredding it?

SPIN: What was your reaction after the Gulf War, and the jingoism and the euphoria that followed?

Zappa: Well I had a very bad reaction to the war in general because it was such an incredibly stupid idea to do it. All you got to do is look at what's happening in Iraq this week, and see whether it was a good idea to send a half a million guys over there to blow shit up. It's a bad idea. So I look at it as the utter failure of diplomacy, the utter failure, embarrassing failure of the U.N. to stand up for any of the original principles that it was supposedly constructed to uphold. It was well worded into putting a rubber stamp on the war, because George Bush decides that there ought to be something called the new world order. I did an interview with a German television station not long ago, and the guy said: " 'New world order,' doesn't he know that Hitler said that? That is a Hitler line."

SPIN: What's your theory of why America didn't finish off the war, why we left Saddam in power?

Zappa: First of all, there's no guarantee you can get him. The other thing is, on *Crossfire* last night, Stephen Solarz was arguing that we should start the war again and go in there and not just get rid of Saddam Hussein, but root out every aspect of the Baathist Party in Iraq. Tell me, what the fuck kind of tweezers are you going to need to do that? If you kill Saddam Hussein the Baathist Party—it's just like trying to get the Communist party out of Russia. At every level. There's Baathist Party guys running everything. Plus five different forms of secret police. How are you going to do that?

The thing is, there's nothing more threatening to those bogus monarchs down there than democracy. If the Kurds and the Shiites succeed in toppling Hussein's government and they go for a democratic parliament and the rest of that stuff, if that trickles southward then it endangers the Kuwait [Emir] and the whole Saudi royal family. *They* don't want democracy anywhere near that peninsula. And also from the U.S. national interest point of view it's

"The record companies thought [video] was the greatest thing. And so the tail started wagging the dog."

"I'm considering running for President in the next election.... I've called two political consultants in Washington and we're just gonna do a little feasibility study to see what it would take."

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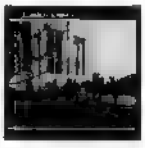

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COWBOY JUNKIES

probably easier for our business guys to deal with one corrupt monarch or another then to deal with some unruly democratic parliament. It's easier to pay off one guy and the rest of his relatives.

SPIN: I think in many ways the reaction to this war was an attempt not only to exorcise the Vietnam syndrome, but also to distract attention from how screwed up we were in the '80s.

Zappa: The only way you can feel good about the '80s is if you can't feel anything at all. In a ten-year period, twelve percent of the homeless are Vietnam vets with nowhere to go, maybe thirty percent were dumped out of mental institutions when Reagan closed them in the early part of the '80s, and the rest of the people were families that got dispossessed during Reagan's depression during '82–'83, when his economics first took its toll, and other people are making a zillion dollars in the stock market by selling junk bonds, and renting puffed air to each other.

So to feel good about the '80s, I think you would have to be mutated away from the human condition quite a bit, because if you look at the '80s, there was nothing that swell about it. Fortunately for us the music of that period leaves an accurate record of how empty that whole era was.

SPIN: Do you think much music came out of the '80s that was valid, as music or as social criticism?

Zappa: Well, I kept doing it. I'm sure there were a few people in America who did it, but you never heard it, because the bulk of what you heard is what you saw. The beginning of the '80s gave us MTV, and music changed and switched from an audio to a video medium.

SPIN: For better or worse?

Zappa: For worse, because I believe that the way music is to be consumed is through your ears, and it shouldn't be too important whether the person performing it looks like a model.

The record companies thought it was the greatest thing that ever happened to them because it was a way for them to get cheap commercials. And so the tail started wagging the dog. The record companies stopped signing groups that could play in favor of groups that looked good in pictures because they figured we could always get a producer to sing their songs and do their stuff for them, and that happened plenty of times. So you get a bunch of models to make the video and forget about the music. So that part of that worked. A young audience who never experienced any music to speak of started watching MTV the same way they watched Saturday morning cartoons. And it caught on. There was no competition. Before MTV if you wanted to have a hit record, there were probably 10,000 stations in America where you could break something regionally and have it spread. Now there is one MTV with a short playlist, and because of that the record companies put their own balls into the bear trap and sprung it on themselves, now they can't make a move without calling MTV and getting permission, they call up in advance to say we are getting ready to make a video, we are going to have such and such pictures in it, what do you think, and MTV is a total censorship organization and it has all the major record companies at its mercy.

I started getting really weary of MTV when they started inventing rock'n'wrestling, where we're seeing videos of Hulk Hogan urging kids to take their vitamins, urging kids to grow up big and strong like him, and be an American. It really was on the level of a Saturday morning cartoon.

SPIN: What do you think about the crossover of rap? I don't mean Vanilla Ice, because that's just a cartoon character thing too, but the crossover of heavy black rap, and style and fashion, taken on by whites.

Zappa: I don't find anything strange or wrong with that.

SPIN: No, I don't either. But how do you explain it?

Zappa: Well, there's a corollary when those black groups were singing about their girlfriends in the '50s. Because not everyone that bought those records was a black teenager in Manual Arts High School. And there were white suburban teenagers who were going, "I know a girl with that same name." It was their tune for their life. If the music speaks to you then I don't think it makes a difference what the race or orientation is. Besides, today, rage is rage. Rage is a commodity.

"The Democrats stand for nothing except "I wish I was a Republican" and the Republicans stand for raw, unbridled evil and greed and ignorance smothered in balloons and ribbons."

And the unfortunate aspect is that I know there's white suburban rage, but there is no voice for it.

I believe they do have things that they are pissed off about, but I don't think they've found a vehicle to express it, because if the white suburban kid decides to do rap, then he's not using his voice, he's just shouting through somebody else's rented megaphone. And it's not too unique or original, and at one point, if you do that, it's like you're copying off someone else's commercial gimmick. And it takes away from the authenticity of whatever else you have to say.

SPIN: You've gotten involved in doing business in Czechoslovakia. What has failed in Eastern Europe?

Zappa: The United States government.

SPIN: What do you mean by that?

Zappa: Because after all these years of saying "We'd love to be rid of Communism," and then we built up these weapons to destroy Communism, and this huge army, it rots before your very eyes, and you've got this opportunity to go in and spread democracy, which all the Presidents have talked about. "This is democracy, it's good, everyone should have it, our way is the best," and all it would have taken is a couple of bucks, and some advisers to say, "Here's how a free-market system works" and a little friendly help. And that just wasn't there.

SPIN: What was your background? Your father

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TAME YOURSELF

"A first rate collection of 14 new pop songs. Anyone who likes one song will probably like them all." – *PEOPLE*

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RNA

MARTIN CUNNING finds dance music's next generation in England's sleepy West Country.

MASSIVE Resistance

MASSIVE ATTACK LIKES TO KEEP everything semifocused," explains Robert "3-D" Del Naja in his soft Bristolian burr. "We knew the first single wasn't exactly commercial, but we weren't bothered—the point was to get a vibe going."

The vibe is in full effect. When Massive Attack dropped the mesmeric rap trance "Daydreaming" into the U.K. marketplace last fall, it died on impact. Two months later it had been reanimated on every other end-of-year list, and by March the band's sophomore seven-inch "Unfinished Sympathy," a string-laden lament to lost love, was a Top 20 fixture. So far so blah—except that both tunes, in concept and execution, were light-years away from standard British dance filler; taken together, they sounded like the future. With its imminent debut LP, *Blue Lines*, Massive Attack has served up a main course worthy of that appetizer. Delicious vinyl, and album of the year.

Massive Attack has kept us waiting. Born out of the thriving postpunk scene in Bristol, and its attendant club culture, the outfit survived an uneasy adolescence as half of the legendary Wild Bunch—a collective of musicians, DJs, rappers, and graffiti artists which included Soul II Soul stalwart Nellee Hooper—before mutating into the current lineup. At the project's core are Daddy G, 3-D, and Mushroom, sonic cosmonauts who provide the rhythms and textures and bonklines, the space around

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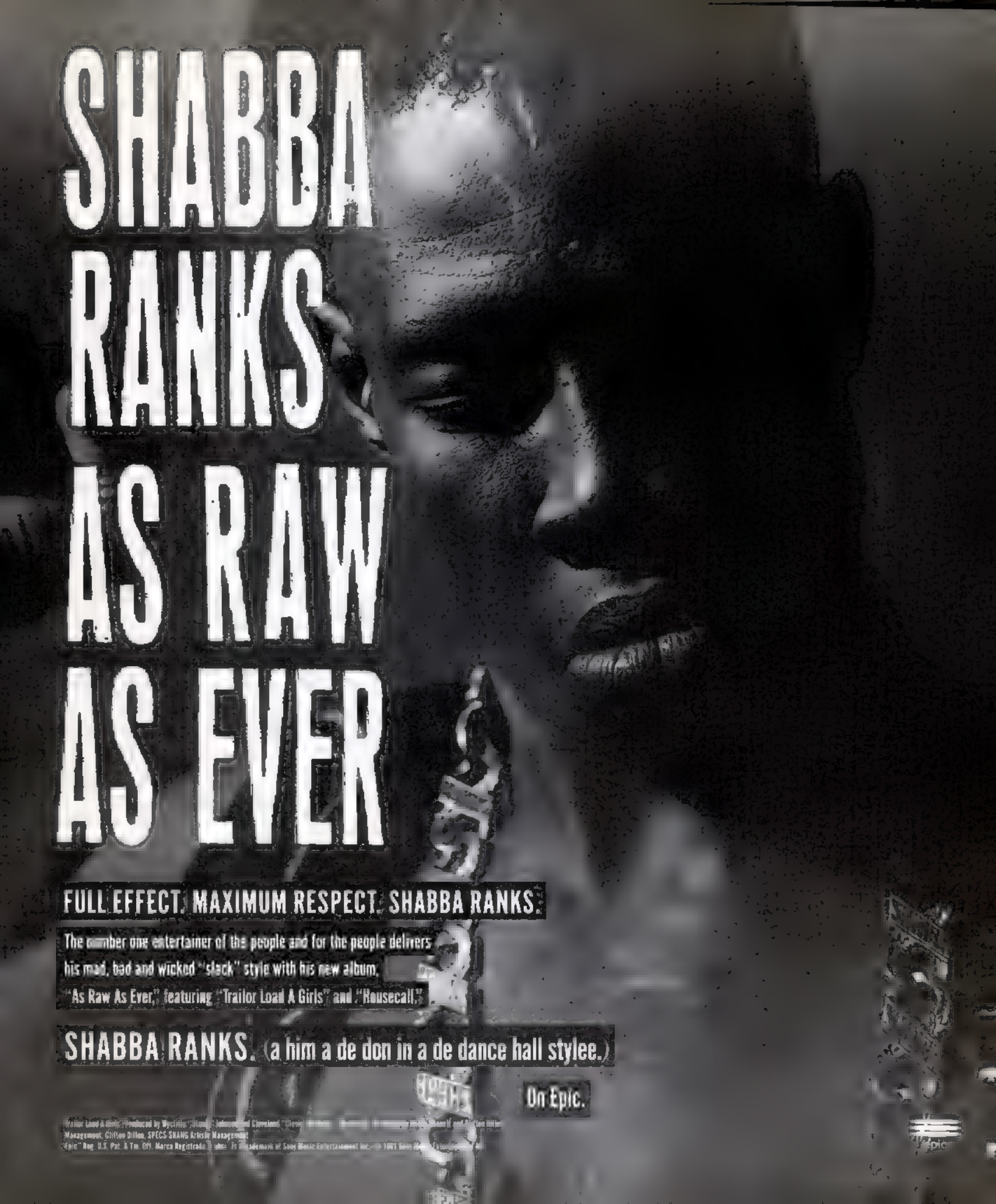
Massive Attack, *from left:* Mushroom, 3-D, Daddy G, and Shara Nelson.

PHOTO BY JEAN BAPTISTE MONDINO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The number one entertainer of the people and for the people delivers his mad, bad and wicked "slack" style with his new album, "As Raw As Ever," featuring "Trailor Load A Girls" and "Housecall."
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AIDS

WORDS FROM THE FRONT

Studies have shown that needle-exchange programs have curbed the spread of HIV. But in New York City, with more IV AIDS cases than any city in the world, needle exchange remains a criminal act. Still, determined activists get out there every day, breaking the law to save lives. MAIA SZALAVITZ tells their story.

PHIL WAITS FOR ACT UP's DAN WILLIAMS TO HAND OUT NEEDLES IN A SMALL, littered concrete park in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. "I haven't shared unsafely since I met Jon Parker two years ago," he says, mentioning one of the initiators of New York's controversial needle-exchange program. Parker, a former addict and founder of the National AIDS Brigade, is one of the unsung heroes of the AIDS battle. In 1986 he started handing out clean needles to IV drug users in Boston and Connecticut. Recently, ACT UP has adopted his guerrilla tactics and now, in defiance of New York law, has been distributing free needles and safe injection kits to users like Phil. Now Phil is instructing a group of addicts nearby.

"Don't share anything," Phil says. "Not the cotton, not the cooker, nothing."

"Right on, right on," says a black man in a brown twill cap. "Godspeed to you. You're doing a good job." The other addicts in the small circle surrounding the six needle-exchange volunteers nod approval. Another man says thanks in a hoarse voice as he is given his needles. All listen attentively to Phil, a short, neatly dressed Latino.

In New York's drug-ridden neighborhoods, addicts don't need to be told that AIDS is a real threat. All of them—if not infected themselves—have at least one close friend or relative who has "the virus."

"I'm HIV," says Teddy, a 34-year-old Hispanic porter with a neat beard and glasses. He looks older than he is, with his haggard face and greenish pallor. "I used to weigh two hundred seventy, now I'm one hundred thirty-eight," he says, showing a picture of himself, smiling and well-muscled, holding his two kids. That was before he started getting sick.

A steady stream of addicts comes to exchange needles, getting up to ten new works in return for their used ones. Most are hobbled by their addiction in one way or another. Many use canes. Most have teeth missing. Almost all move awkwardly and have swollen hands. Users look like that all over.

In ACT UP's three needle-exchange locations—Brooklyn, the South Bronx, and the Lower East Side—junkies of all kinds show up for the exchange. Word gets around, and they come. Here in Williamsburg there's a white, middle-class woman with long brown hair whose skin has turned grayish-green. She has a large fresh track on her neck, just under her chin. There's a slight, well-dressed black woman wearing a Walkman and keeping an eye on her baby in a stroller. There's an old homeless Irishman. And numerous others of every description. The only category that seems underrepresented is people under 20.

Many of those here for needles leave the exchange area and shoot up right on the street. On Trautmann Street in Bushwick, where the Brooklyn needle-exchange crew stops next, you can see the addicts alone or in small groups, getting off in doorways or against the walls of factories.

Today it's hot on the street. Police cars are prowling, so the addicts are nervous and edgy. Only one person is getting off in the shooting gallery in a messy first floor tenement. Up the street the cops are patting a man down. He leans there, passive and scared. Farther down the block another addict begs for handouts, claiming he was just mugged by a gang of teens with baseball bats. He and another man furtively smoke crack from black, broken glass-pipe stems.

EMILYA NAYMARK

Around the corner, ACT UP's Dan Williams and his friends, carrying sanitary waste containers now filled with dirty needles, talk in a factory doorway with three emaciated Hispanic women with crooked teeth. A police car lurks several hundred feet away in their line of sight. But the women exchange needles anyway, giggling and taking the time to tell Williams that they had a bet on when he'd be there. "I was off by two minutes," says one. In ACT UP's three hours of work, it has exchanged 600 needles in Brooklyn alone. Their crews in the South Bronx and Lower East Side will have distributed another 2,250 the same day.

AS THE RATE OF NEW HIV INfections in gay men has declined, the rate among addicts has risen—as if to compensate. Nationally, addicts make up 23 percent of new AIDS diagnoses, a

number that increases every year.

Thousands have died as a result of intravenous AIDS infections. In some New York and New Jersey communities, one in five adults is an IV drug user. The cost of AIDS spread by needles in New York State alone will reach an estimated $3 billion a year by 1995. New York City, with its quarter-million addicts (60 percent are believed to be infected with HIV), is both the AIDS and IV drug capital of the world.

In an epidemic as devastating as this, most communities would seek out all the help they could get, and welcome volunteers like Dan Williams, who has spent every Saturday this year in the streets of Brooklyn and the Lower East Side. But in New York, what Dan is doing may well land him in prison.

"WE STARTED GIVING OUT NEEDLES IN JANUARY of 1990," said Williams, looking straight in the eye of Paul Shechtman, council to the district attorney. Williams was testifying in his own defense. Arrested in New York just over one year ago for needle possession, he and seven other AIDS activists ("The Needle Eight") are on trial for what in most European countries—and several major American cities—would be government-sanctioned AIDS prevention.

A similar trial in Boston led to an acquittal of needle-exchange pioneer Jon Parker, who is also a defendant in this case. That decision paved the way for local organizations to do needle exchange in Boston without fear of arrest. But in New York the resistance to clean-needle programs is more fanatical.

"Eliminating IV drug use is a higher goal than preventing the spread of AIDS," insists New York City Health Commissioner Dr. Woodrow A. Myers, Jr., explaining his opposition to clean-needle programs. The Black Leadership Commission on AIDS (BLCA) agrees, calling such programs "Band-Aids" and "sops" offered in place of long-term solutions such as drug-treatment and antipoverty programs.

The BLCA consists of powerful black New York City politicians and community leaders (New York's Mayor David Dinkins is a former member). It has consistently opposed any effort other than drug treatment to prevent the spread of HIV in addicts.

Nobody disagrees that the best possible outcome would be for addicts to simply stop using drugs. But in New York, treatment is available to less than 10 percent of all IV addicts, with three- to six-month waiting lists common for entering many programs. There is widespread agreement that even if money was available to treat addicts on demand, politics—"Not in my backyard!"—would delay these programs for five to ten years.

Of course, even if programs were available, it's highly unlikely that all addicts would give up drugs. The latest studies indicate that among addicts only half would accept treatment at any given time. Research shows that 75 percent to 80 percent of all addicts relapse after initial treatment.

In Williamsburg, Brooklyn, ACT UP's needle-exchange program is illegal but saving lives.

Still, BLCA fears that "sending the wrong message" by handing out needles is too risky, despite the possible benefit of preventing HIV spread. They feel that the research is not convincing. The physician who chaired the BLCA's research into the area, Dr. Larry Brown of the Addiction Research and Treatment Corporation, was the sole prosecution witness in the "Needle Eight" trial.

"The spread of AIDS has leveled off in New York," Brown said at the trial. And rather than settling for unproven solutions (such as clean-needle programs), Brown said he believes New York should wait for a "gold standard" in AIDS prevention. "A lot of those people are going to die," Brown admitted. "It's unfortunate. I deeply regret it."

Where needles are legally available, the HIV infection rate in addicts is *six times lower* than in states where syringes are illegal! Eleven states make needle possession without a prescription a crime. Those same states also have the eleven largest AIDS and IV drug problems.

As Brown spoke, rage and sadness came to the eyes of defendant Richard Elovich, himself a gay man and recovering addict. "The gay community didn't wait for studies to start using condoms," he countered, his words fast and furious. "They didn't wait for studies to start using aerosolized pentamidine. That statement is unconscionable. It suggests that people are expendable. As a recovering addict, I don't care what my color is. I'll reach out to 'those people' if he won't. A do-nothing strategy like Dr. Brown recommends is reprehensible."

Elovich also cites the research, none of which confirms any of BLCA's fears of increased addiction, and all of which suggests that needle exchange may be preventing the spread of HIV. Perhaps the most compelling studies come from San Francisco, a city that was sensitized to AIDS far earlier than most, and which started a citywide outreach and education effort for addicts back in 1986. This program went so far as to include television commercials and subway ads about the safe use of needles. Prevention Point, an underground needle-exchange program started at the same time with the tacit understanding that the city would not enfoce its needle laws. Result? The HIV rate for IV drug users has stabilized in San Francisco at a far lower level, 15 percent, than in New York with its dismal 60 percent. Furthermore, San Francisco's IV HIV rate has not increased since 1987, and cases of hepatitis B, which can also be spread by dirty needles, have dropped dramatically since the programs started.

Another study of various states, weighted for IV drug using populations, shows that where needles are legally available the HIV infection rate in addicts is *six times lower* than in states where syringes are illegal! Eleven states make needle possession without a prescription a crime. Those same states also have the eleven largest AIDS and IV drug problems.

Moreover, none of the research suggests that needle-exchange programs increase drug abuse. In fact, studies of such programs in a number of cities—from Amsterdam to Portland, Oregon—show that drug use stayed the same or even declined.

MY OWN KNOWLEDGE ABOUT AIDS AND IV drug use is based on more than research. I started injecting drugs in 1986. The first time I did, I shared a needle. A friend shot me up with cocaine using his works, since I didn't yet have my own.

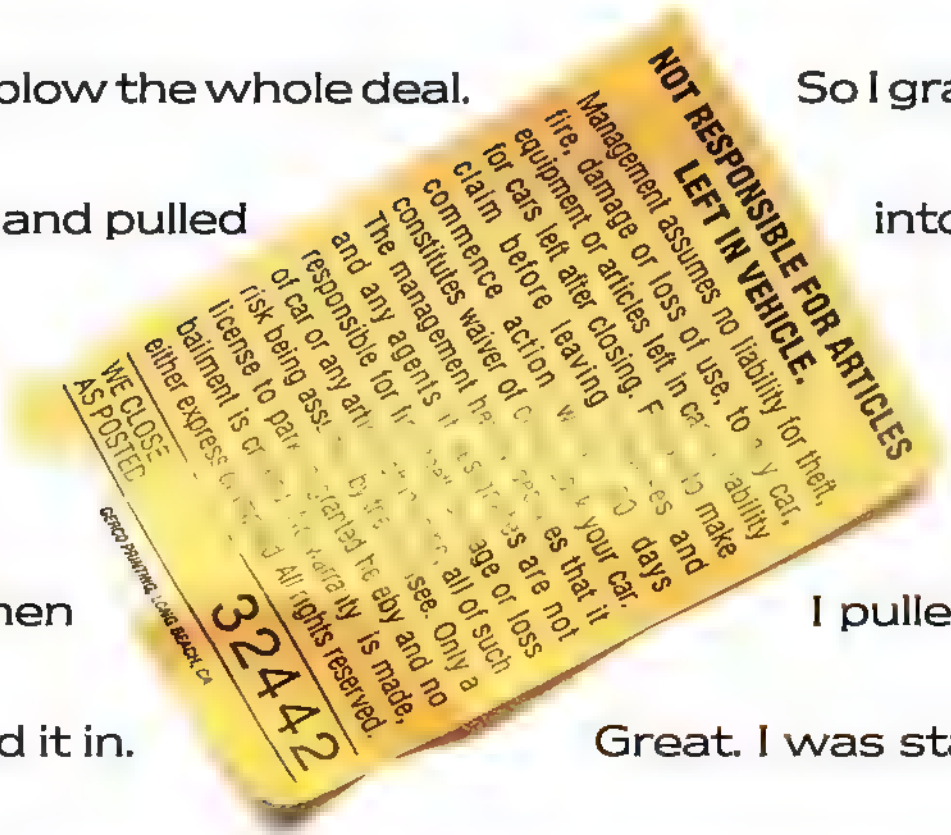
I sat on my bed in my apartment and watched, fascinated as the needle slid under my skin and the blood surged into the barrel. He slowly pushed the plunger in. I felt the icy taste of the coke tingle instantly through my tongue and I was stunned by the quickness and the ecstasy of the experience.

Soon after that I began shooting heroin—

cont nued on page 88

PHOTO BY ANDREW LICHENSTEIN

"I go roaring into the lot and bang! I get hit with: '75 cents for each 20 minutes.' Unfortunately, I was going to have to eat it. Showing up late for this job interview could blow the whole deal. So I grabbed the ticket and pulled into a space.



And then I pulled out and backed it in. Great. I was starting to freak. I checked my hair. 'Fine.' My teeth. 'Okay.' My tie. 'Too late now.' As I looked down I suddenly spotted it.

NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR ARTICLES

LEFT IN VEHICLE. I laughed."

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ANTIHERO

OPINION

We know it has a beat, a hook, a groove, and a look, but does new music have a heart? Pioneer dance producer John Robie takes a critical look at the monster he helped create and rues the day the music died. Interview by CELIA FARBER.

IT'S 1991 AND THE FUTURE IS HERE. THE RECORD YOU JUST heard on the radio had exactly 116 beats per minute. And the snare drum sounds like two giant plates of metal slamming against each other in an industrial plant. The voice is female, high-pitched and monotonous, cocooned in an electronic shell. It doesn't sound human. You can dance to it. You can do aerobics to it. It sounds fabulous. It is flawless and it leaves you cold. The rhythm is everything—the song virtually nonexistent, and the melody reduced to a single hook that was probably sampled from somebody who made music in the '70s. Maybe shoplifting should be called "sampling" too. Is this the Brave New World of Music? Has technology finally usurped pop music's soul? Or has it simply offered up a newer, bolder, more perfected aesthetic?

Producer John Robie drums his fingers on the well-worn console of the now legendary Soho recording studio, Greene Street Recording. "I'm getting in a mood," he mumbles. "You can tell. I'm getting in a fucking mood."

Though you may not know his name, you've almost certainly heard his music. Throughout the '80s Robie, alone and in tandem with his partner, dance-master Arthur Baker, wrote, produced, or played on some of the most groundbreaking records of the then-burgeoning dance-rap genre—"Planet Rock" and "Looking for the Perfect Beat" by Soul Sonic Force, "Play at Your Own Risk" by Planet Patrol, "I.O.U." by Freeez, and "One More Shot" by C Bank, to name a few. The walls of the studio are lined with gold and platinum records produced here over the years: Public Enemy, Ice Cube, Chaka Khan, Slick Rick, and Run-D.M.C. With an ample collection of hits to his credit and a house in the Hamptons, Robie withdrew somewhat from the industry spotlight over the last few years. "I was bored," he says. "I hated what music had become. I had mixed feelings about the role I had played in starting a sound that degenerated into such mediocrity. But then Hank Shocklee came up to me about a month ago and said, "Robie, they're playing all your songs in the clubs again. They were dance music, but they were *good songs*. Get back in there man, make some more." So I thought about it, and I'm ready to go back at it again. I want to make dance music again."

We walk across the street to a trendy Soho eatery to talk. We order strawberry margaritas that are way too sweet and when the bartender brings over a plastic container filled with limes, John Robie, in frustration, dumps the entire bin into his drink. He's like that. The next thing that annoys him is the music in the place—Beatles. "Fuck the Beatles!" He shouts to the bartender. "Turn that off." "I can't," says the bartender. "It's Muzak. It's all we can play here."

When John Robie gets to talking about music, he swings his arms, his eyes blaze, his hair flies, the furniture moves, food splatters—this is the love of his life we're talking about and it *matters*. He is a study in contradiction, chain-drinking shots of Stoli—his rant a swirling mix of love and hate. He hates what music has become—clinical, fraudulent, soulless—yet he can't escape his own critical role in the early-'80s techno-production revolution—which was when music *got* that way. His torment is that of a Dr. Frankenstein whose monster not only lived but conquered the world.

He didn't want to do this interview at first. I met him through a friend and when I heard what he had to say about music I asked if he would go on the record with it. "I'd rather not," he said. Other magazines had tried before SPIN. But I kept bugging him, and eventually I found his Achilles' heel—"If you really had balls, you'd do it," I said.

SPIN: Okay Robie, why does music suck these days? I mean, loads of people would argue with that but . . .

Robie: Records are a mess. They sound like shit. Because nothing is real anymore. There are two types of musicians—those who love music and those who are just trying to get over. These days almost everyone is just trying to get over. There's a very fine line between hype and lying. You take something that already exists—somebody has an ability, they have a voice, they can dance—you take that and you hype it. You make people want it. But then there's lying. And that's taking somebody who has *no* ability and making them something they're not. The old Hollywood star system was like the music business is today. They'd find somebody and give her singing lessons and acting lessons and diction lessons and they'd teach her how to

PHOTO BY DANA AMATO

Art by Stephen Sprouse

SURPRISE

Miller Genuine Draft

ARTIST PROFILE HAVANA 3AM

The world hasn't heard very much from bassist Paul Simonon since 1985, when he and Joe Strummer, as the last holdouts of the splintered Clash, released *Cut The Crap*, a finale for what had once been widely hailed as the only band that mattered. Now Simonon's back—and Miller Genuine Draft's got him. The former Clash rocker, who has been called "the coolest man to ever strap on a bass guitar," has recently put together another great four piece outfit, Havana 3AM.

Havana 3AM's self-titled debut album sports a stripped down Latino-rockabilly sound, often conjuring up images of high noon in a desert border town (complete with a Latin horn section, vibrato guitar and samples of gunshots and Mexican shouting.) Simonon and crew may seem out of their territory when singing about bullfights and the old west, but they validate themselves by bringing such imagery to an urban setting, where the runaway train is the subway and the outlaws steal cars for joyrides.

Where did the influences for the Havana 3AM concept come from? "I had a lot of Latin type records that I'd picked up on tour with the Clash," Simonon explains. "Then I moved from London to El Paso and kind of hung about after we broke up. The Mexican border wasn't far away, and I really learned a lot about that type of music."

To handle the lead vocals, Simonon recruited his old pal Nigel Dixon formerly of a band called the Whirlwinds. Simonon and Dixon bought two old motorcycles in El Paso and road tripped to Los Angeles, where they took up with Texan guitarist Gary Myrick, formerly of Gary Myrick and the Figures. "We just listened to all these Latin and Reggae records together and formulated the style of the group by just playing." The new group then traveled to Simonon's London where they hooked up with drummer Travis Williams, completing the Havana lineup.

When you check out their show, expect to hear gems from the new album *Havana 3AM*, including the hit single "The Hardest Game," unrecorded songs in the making, and maybe even a rendition of Simonon's popular Clash song "Guns of Brixton," performed, as the bassist puts it, "Havana style." Don't miss Havana 3AM, coming soon at high noon to a town near you

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walk right, and dress her, and then make her a star. Like Paula Abdul. But there must be people out there who can sing better than Paula Abdul, who should get record deals. Why does anyone care that she didn't sing on her record? What difference does it make when the finished product is so ridiculously unappealing? It's whining, it's not singing. And there's a history of successful whiners. Ronnie Spector was a whiner, Dee Dee Clark was a whiner, Claudine Clark was a whiner, even Diana Ross whined—but they made your dick hard. It didn't matter what they said because it was just done with passion.

It's not just Paula Abdul that bothers me, it's this whole desexualization of music. Taking all the sex out of it and making it squeaky clean. Why is it so important for rock'n'roll to be so sanitized? Why have rock musicians become spokesmen for antidrug campaigns? First of all, I'm not pro drugs, but it's total hypocrisy. There are people running around doing drugs saying they don't do drugs and it's become part of their image.

SPIN: The industry must believe that those images are selling records.

Robie: They do. But I don't think that people want all that. Just look at Guns N' Roses. Their image is horrible, but they've sold loads of records because people like the music and people like that they're honest.

The funny thing is that writers love to attack disco, they love to talk about it as being the most stagnant period in American popular music and culture. But it wasn't. This is the most stagnant period. Disco was the mass production of music with the same beat and the same themes and people wearing uniforms. But isn't that what metal is? Isn't that what rock bands are? Rock bands are disco. I mean drummers don't even take fills anymore. When was the last time you heard somebody take a fill on a record? Some producer's in the background going, "Take the groove," and "Go four four four four." They want it to sound like everything else on radio. Heavy metal drummers are pussies. *Heavy metal drummers are pussies.* Nobody has any balls. I'm tired of reading lies. Like, this whole thing about Deee-Lite really pissed me off. I think it was SPIN in fact that wrote "new music is not dead—here's Deee-Lite?" You must be kidding. Some out-of-pitch girl singing "Groove Is in the Heart"? Is "Groove Is in the Heart" any more relevant than "Fly Robin Fly"? Why is something validated through imitation? People talk about disco now like it was the death of music yet they do it again. Disco is just a repetitive beat with bullshit nonsense lyrics that people can dance to and anesthetize themselves to. Why is dance music any different than disco? It's not. It's worse.

SPIN: Who says it's any different than disco?

Robie: Critics validate it all the time by taking it seriously and reviewing it like it's art. It's not art.

SPIN: What is it?

Robie: It's puke. I was in a cab today listening to KISS-FM for half an hour and every song had the same fucking beat. It just anesthetizes the listener. The melody no longer matters, the voice no longer matters. It's puke. It's like disco. The only difference is that real people played on disco records, they had melodies, they had melodic references, and they were more interesting.

So anyway, this bimbo from Deee-Lite says, This is art—music isn't dead. And because she asserts it, we believe it. So what's happened is that anyone in popular culture that asserts their belief aggressively has to be taken seriously. It's crap. She should be giving out makeup in Bloomingdale's. Why were platform shoes silly when people were wearing them and they're not silly now? "Groove Is in the Heart"? What the fuck does that mean? Is she privy to some special knowledge that I don't have? She can't sing, she can't write, and somehow people are justifying not doing their own music and sampling by saying, "Well, it's an art"; "It's really psychedelic taking other people's music and using it and reshaping it." Bullshit. It's an excuse for laziness. Rock critics, music writers make their living trying to intellectualize stuff that basically is made for eleven-year-olds. So they got to make it seem bigger than it is or else they wouldn't have jobs.

SPIN: If Paula Abdul has any talent, what is it? There must be some reason why she was singled out.

Robie: She has no talent. It's a lie. It's like 1984. You don't know. I mean, for all I know she may be able to dance. I don't know. I've never seen her dance. Her videos are edited down to these one-second cuts so you never get to see whether she can dance. No actually, I saw her dance at some awards ceremony, and she looked pretty funny. Most of the routine was spent with guys lifting her up over their heads, straining mind you.

SPIN: You know, the men aren't sexy either.

Robie: No, I know. It's not real. Like INXS. What the fuck does "Suicide Blonde" mean? Her hair killed itself? It's all video, because the music can't stand on it own. What's missing in the music is supplanted by the video. You start thinking the music is sexy because they got a lot of dancing girls who look interested in the guys, and the guys look aloof and passive like they don't give a fuck about anything. That's not sex. Sex is Marvin Gaye singing "I'm too busy thinkin' about my baby / I ain't got time for nothing else." Music was just as silly and stupid back then, but it was the way they sang it. There was conviction. Why suddenly, does aloofness and passivity pass for sexuality?

The thing is, with most artists today, you just don't know. It's become so stratified, so gentrified, that the industry has created escape routes for the perception that everything that they sign is bad or pabulum or unimportant. They pick bands that are generically the same. Guys with stupid haircuts who don't dress well, who slouch, and sing badly. That is what is perceived as art music now. It doesn't matter whether they're good. It really doesn't. Sonic Youth is ridiculous. It doesn't mean anything. The biggest travesty of all is Paul Simon. I mean here's this guy who has enormous talent. He's a great songwriter and one of the best acoustic guitar players that lives. But he got burned out. So what did he do? He started "borrowing" music from other cultures and then he put on these intentionally obscured lyrics that are designed to make you think that he knows something that you don't know. And the critics love it. But I think it's cultural rape. And that just

continued on page 86

years of serv... best... country on the ...ad they should know about style.

"I'm into upwardly global funk-a-go-go and a band called Monkey Meet!"

"Rock 'n' roll rules when Lord Trav's name-an'-an' on the Gibsons."

"I'm crankin' Trippt power funk whenever I get the chance!"

"You haven't seen ...ive show ... you've seen Molly and the Heymakers play their plowboy R & B!"

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Take this band from L.A. called Monkey Meet. Calling this band funk is much too easy. That's why they call themselves "upwardly global funk-a-go-go!" You've got to check it out. And how about Worldbeat and ska? Most people don't even know what it is. Miller Brewing Company thinks it's hot enough to support L.A.'s Bonedaddys, Rhode Island's BOP (Harvey), Phoenix, Arizona's Morning Star and a New York ska band called The Toasters.

Now, if it's authentic ethnic sounds you want, it's ethnic sounds you get. For starters, there's Zydeco on the Bayou rock 'n' roll, head-bangin' ball music or the it's-hip-to-dig-rap scene. That's too easy. Freak 'em out. Throw some ...d up Miller Genuine Draft. Band Net... 'em, because, after ter... ...about ... Mo... ...ayer... ...ter... ...t blowjoy ... ...Where ... ...ear you ... ...about soft ... ...new vo... ...ar... ...release ... the c... ...when ayers ... ...at ne... ...Genu... ...ne ... ...Pocket Mat Cat... ...ou ... ...wu pwah ... ...ou ... ...it out And ... ...ngrgtubon spe... ...ys ... ...themselves o... ...go!" You've got to check ... about Worldbeat and Ska? ...

And if you want to kick up your ... or cry in your Genuine Draft, the choice ain't easy but they sure are aplenty. Check out Mercury Polygram recording artists Grayghost, or how about Warner ... Molly and the Heymakers, whose ... "Somethin' Called Love" ... country charts last ... How about the roots and rockabilly ... San Diego's Paladins, New York's ... 7 or The Jinns, who have been known to shake the snow right off the Rocky Mountains?

Now, if you got the blues, the Band Network's got that, too, with guitar slinger Anson Funderburgh and his Rockets, featuring the sweet voice of Sam Myers. Or, even cure what ails you with the jumpin' blues of Little Charlie and the Nightcats.

So now I'm thinkin' all that music is cool, but what about if all I want to do is rock the house? No problem. Do a Dick Holliday and the Bamboo Gang show; or maybe you're lookin' for the James-Brown-style R & B of The Dynatones, or Marcia Ball's Jerry-Lee-Lewis-Gulf-Coast R & B style, or hitch a ride on Beat the Clock's "Funk Bus," or check out why the Washington Area Music

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ABSOLUT MANHATTAN.

SPINS

REVIEWS EDITED BY JIM GREER

PLATTER DU JOUR

BIG AUDIO DYNAMITE II

The Globe

Columbia

Ten years ago this month my brother and I stood in the ballroom that was once Bond's Clothing Store in Times Square, watching roadies wheel a console television onto the stage. The concert we'd come to see was more than an hour late and the crowd was restless by the time the TV was switched on at 12:30 A.M. The house lights went out as the *Tomorrow* show went on the air. The members of the Clash walked out on the stage and watched as their own images appeared on the screen and sat down with Tom Snyder. Guitarist Mick Jones held a mike against the TV speaker for the interview. Then as the assault of commercials began the Clash crashed into their set, kicking over and smashing the TV. I'm not sure what that anecdote has to do with this review, except that the Clash was a hard act to follow. But now Big Audio Dynamite has lasted longer than the real Clash did. And it still works.

One of the reasons the first Big Audio Dynamite album was so great is that it was such a surprise in 1985. B.A.D. was one of the first rock bands to incorporate the techniques of dance, funk, and hip hop, freely experimenting with effects and samples. Now Mick Jones is back with an entirely new band lineup (prompting the addition of the "II" to the moniker) and a fifth release, *The Globe*.

The song "Rush" opens the album with an immediate nonapology: "If I had my time again / I would do it all the same / And not change a single thing / Even when I was to blame." The song is a killer, alternating playful piano, a hard drum beat, and a Who synthesizer sample, but it epitomizes one of the main flaws of the record. Just as "Rush" is getting hot, Jones intentionally goes off-key and begins a slow interlude that lasts over a minute before the song kicks back in. Jones's idea of a bridge is sometimes just stopping a song altogether, and as on 1989's *Megatop Phoenix*, there are too many such moments during and between songs where the momentum is lost. One of B.A.D.'s trademarks is odd tempo and melody changes, but the music stalls when the lulls go too far. The absolute most annoying part of the record comes when Jones experiments with a stupid synthesized vocal thing a few times toward the end.

Overall, however, this is Jones's best work since B.A.D.'s debut, with the effects and samples pared down like never before for the sake of the songs themselves. Other highlights besides "Rush" are "The Globe," which samples "Should I Stay or Should I Go"; "Innocent Child"; the closest B.A.D. gets to a ballad, and "The Tea Party"; a sort of orchestrated operatic medley of some of the other songs on the album. But unlike all of B.A.D.'s efforts but the first, *The Globe* doesn't feature just two or three really great songs with the rest of the cuts ranging from okay to mediocre. Most all of the material here is very strong and straightforward. And that's a good thing. *(available mid-June)*

Mark Blackwell

The Handy Omniscient SPIN Rating System

●= Go directly to your local record store. Buy this album. Immediately. Kill if you must.

●= Whoa! Slow down, pal. This album is pretty good, but you can't buy everything in the store. Can you?

●= Stop it. Put that down. Go buy something to eat instead. You have to eat, too, you know.

ILLUSTRATION BY SUSAN DECAPITE

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VARIOUS ARTISTS

Dangerhouse: Volume One

Frontier

WEIRDOS

Weird World

Frontier

Malcolm McLaren never cast a glance toward L.A. in the early days of punk-rockdom, but, then, no one on the West Coast really seemed to notice. Who cared about the Sex Pistols when the Deadbeats were singing "Maria, Maria / I just shot a girl named Maria." Anarchy in Los Angeles? No, just fucking around, thanks. But all the proof seemed lost forever, gone with the trash that angry moms threw it in. Until now. With Frontier's resurrection of early Dangerhouse recordings, you can rehear some 12 years later what cheap vodka caused you to miss the first time around. The Dils' distorted, perfectly off-key "Class War," the Weirdos' twisted, manic "Solitary Confinement," and Rhino 39's speedy, addictive "Prolixin Stomp" come off as clean as recording in a bathroom permits. Although the production may be shoddy in places and the notes often bum, these do-it-yourself singles,

from X's "Los Angeles" to the Random's "Let's Get Rid of NY," depict a short-lived but explosive scene that all too often is credited to the East Coast or England.

All these bands, with the exception of the Weirdos, who so aptly titled their last release "Condor," are defunct or sadly, as in Black Randy's

Little Sutty's Quest for Music *by Mark Blackwell*

case, six feet under. For the Weirdos though, life never ended. Their happy brand of caffeinated Bozo meets Jack the Ripper tunes can be found in bulk on *Weird World*, a sort of best o' the Weirdos, 1977–1981. It's packed full of nostalgic "hits" including "We Got the Neutron Bomb" and "Helium Bar." From the band who chose a smiley face over skull and crossbones, it's a blast of pure demented elation. *(both available late June)*

Lorraine Ali

MIGHTY LEMON DROPS

Sound

Sire

In the collegiate pop arena, which draws its influence from the '60s Byrds–Beatles pop sensibility, what were once hooks are now clichés. In attempts to deny this obvious truth, bands working this terrain—the Mighty Lemon Drops included, though those Manchester bands are guilty as well—cover this drying up with excessive echo, nondistinct, nondescript vocals, and inefficient layers of guitar. They promote texture over the pop hook. So it's art rock without the art. Which, given the choice, isn't a bad option.

But really, while the pop underground has prided itself with pop that isn't popular, what to do now with pop that isn't catchy? *Sound*, however, does have a few moments: The guitar jangle of "Annabelle" is likable, the chorus to "Cold Cold Heart" (not the Hank Williams song) bears repeating. But you, the listener, shouldn't have your memory tested this way. You might start to think there's something wrong with you. *(available mid-June)*

Rob O'Connor

DREAM WARRIORS

And Now the Legacy Begins

4th & Broadway

When De La Soul released *Three Feet High and Rising* the ever-conservative rap community was thrown on its collective ear. Oddly, their influence hasn't spawned many successors—until now. Not from Hollis, Compton, or Strong Island, Toronto's Dream Warriors are one of the first tantalizing post-De La Soul, non-Native Tongue Posse groups to surface.

From the onset, Dream Warriors declare they're on a "boombastic" mission, so look out. *And Now the Legacy Begins* starts with Capital Q and King Lou delivering stunning, almost seamless sample-driven tracks. Singles like "My Definition of a

Boombastic Jazz Style," "Ludi," and "Wash Your Face in My Sink" shy away from old-school boasts and wholeheartedly entertain, mixing up ska, bebop, ragamuffin, and funk jams. The duo, through "Voyage Through the Multiverse," also show a darker, more streetwise side. "U Could Be Arrested," in which a Rasta protagonist talks about his criminal tendencies, is as captivating as the speaker-rattling dub bassline.

It's ambitious to title any debut *And Now the Legacy Begins*, so it's a good thing for the Dream Warriors that this sucker lives up to its name. *(available late June)*

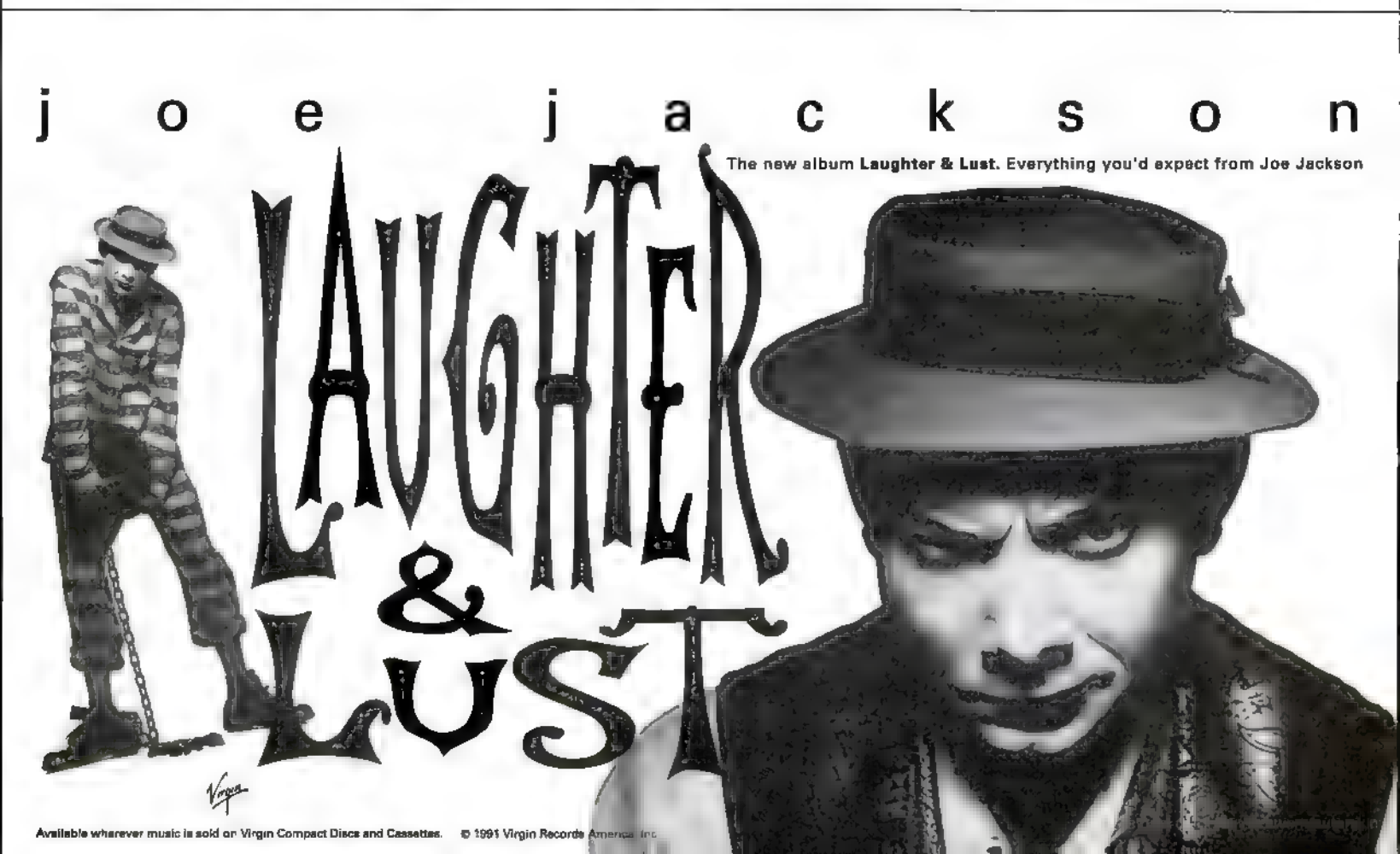
Darren Ressler

DAVID BYRNE

The Forest

Luaka Bop/Sire/Warner Bros.

For over a decade, David Byrne's aim has been to "think with your hips" and "stop making sense." He's sought release from the white man's burden (self-consciousness) in the voodoo rhythms of funk, African, and Latin American music. But now, abruptly, Byrne has shifted his attention from the tropics to Northern Europe. *The Forest* is his debut as an orchestral composer, and to my mind, his most interesting excursion from Talking Heads since *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*. *The Forest* is Byrne's attempt to evoke the early 19th century and the transition from rural peasant life to industrial society. Byrne's declared aim is to capture both the romance of the factory and the ominous aura of "dark satanic mills" shattering the pastoral peace. He's also drawn inspiration from the ancient Sumerian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Auberge

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CHRIS REA

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In-Home House

BY JOHN McCREADY

YOU CAN WRITE YOURSELF round corners trying to intellectualize dance music, a feet-only culture that requires near total darkness and convulsive body movement. Nothing more. No thought required. But now some of the leading lights in Chicago house and Detroit techno house want to sit down. In the U.K. it began visibly with the KLF's *Chill Out* LP, described as being ideal for the "post-club environment," beatless dance music to unwind to. The real starting point, however, is the electronic nature of house and the fact that its more experimental producers like Derrick May of Detroit's Rhythim Is Rhythim simply got bored with drum programming. **Mayday's "The Beginning"** (12-inch, Kool Kat, U.K.) was initially rejected by the record company as an eight-minute-long house record with no kick drum until 7.02—a kind of *1812 Overture* for the English "E" generation.

But in-home house isn't defined by a lack of drum sounds. The work of New York's Joey Beltram, Pal, and some of the records released by the city's uncompromising NuGroove label are also used by some of the more adventurous DJs. **Jazz Document's "Secret Code"** (12-inch, NuGroove) is the work of Rhejl Burrell, whose smooth jazzy inflections are now trademark; the label has also brought us Burrell's sublime **Utopia Project** track, **"File #2,"** and **Joey Beltram's** unwitting tribute to Jean Michel Jarre, **"Annihilate."** (Available on CD, so it's not too obtrusive on the coffee table.)

In the U.K., this kind of Adult Contemporary house music is

Epic of Gilgamesh, one of the earliest myths in human history. No, I don't get the connection either, but it doesn't interfere with the surface pleasures of the music.

The Forest is very "white," very epic; a swirl of tempestuous strings, tumultuous percussion, and primordial woodwind pipings, spiced here and there with strains of Middle Eastern exoticism. The staccato, Teutonic rhythms are closer to Laibach than to the fluent Latin polyrhythms of Byrne's recent *Rei Momo*. Occasionally the string-swept romanticism crosses the thin line between grandeur and grandiosity. Byrne himself admits that the music "can sound kind of corny," but says that his aim was to stay true to the melodramatic way people felt in that time of great upheaval. On the couple of pieces where Byrne sings, he abandons his usual goofy persona and deadpan lyrics in favor of a full throated wordless yodel that sounds remarkably soulful—like a cross between a Beach Boy and avant-garde diva Diamanda Galas. On "Nineveh," Corin Curschellas sings what sounds like Eskimo music (or Liz Fraser from Cocteau Twins suffering with toothache) over a stirring, martial rhythm. Overall, *The Forest* is characterized by a scale and seriousness that compares favorably with the back-to-roots chirpiness of the last three Talking Heads albums. Most impressive. *(available late June)*

Simon Reynolds

DREAD ZEPPELIN

5,000,000*

I.R.S.

If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, you might think that Dread Zeppelin's second album would find this band locked in the heat of a career-long ass kiss. But that's not the case, as these guys know when a good joke is wearing thin. Dread Zeppelin stands out from a lot of other humor bands in that this band plays exceptionally well, especially as heard on Jah Paul Jo's and Carl Jah's multigenre guitars. Given that the band's singer, the bloated, sweaty Elvis impersonator Tortelvis, leads the rest of the band, who look like a bunch of Jamaicans too stoned to find their way to the beach, *5,000,000** guarantees to again bring a smirk to the gloomiest of Guses.

Where the band's debut, *Un-led Ed*, covered classic Zeppelin tracks like "Whole Lotta Love," "Black Dog," and "Immigrant Song," it's only fitting that we now receive Dread Zep-

undergoing a kind of miniboom. People who've gotten bored going to clubs because clubs have gotten boring have been trying to ease themselves into adulthood with methadone substitutes like **Xon's "Mood Set"** (12-inch, Rob G, U.K.), **Model 500's** becalmed **"Ocean to Ocean"** (Metroplex), **Psyche's "Elements"** (Transmat) and any of the more song-based productions from Larry Heard's Chicago-based Alleviated label. Heard is perhaps best known as **Mr. Fingers**, creator of that moody house classic **"Can You Feel It?"** (Trax). Now almost a decade old and still unsurpassed it slips easily into this genre as the most spiritual five minutes your turntable will ever enjoy.

NU GROOVE

Records like **Mind Body and Soul's "Lost in a Maze"** (Adventures Underground, U.K.) are obviously inspired by Heard's vision; this drifts around your living room with a mind to stay, but is all over too soon. If it were aired in a club, people would just want to know why, yet it appears as a 12-inch single and is selling primarily from dance specialist stores. Dance music you can play at home. Take-away techno. Depending on the how you feel about the brutal turn house has taken via an awful series of industrial rave records, this stuff is either heaven or hell. Can *you* feel it?

THE A LIST

M-People "Colour My Life" (de/Construction, U.K.); **Kim English** "Wind in Cairo" (SLB Records); **Soul Family Sensation** ". . . Baby" (One Little Indian; **The Orb** "Essential Dawn" (Big Lire, U.K.); **Code 6** "Second Chapter" (NuGroove)

pelin-ized versions of "Misty Mountain Hop" and the Yardbirds' "The Train Kept A-Rollin." Finally, they've broken the mother lode by bastardizing the sacred "Stairway to Heaven"—an impeccable abomination. Even more to the band's credit are rocking originals such as "Do the Claw" and "Big Ol' Gol Belt," which prove that Dread Zeppelin is much more than a traveling sideshow. *(available late June)*

Darren Ressler

VIOLENT FEMMES

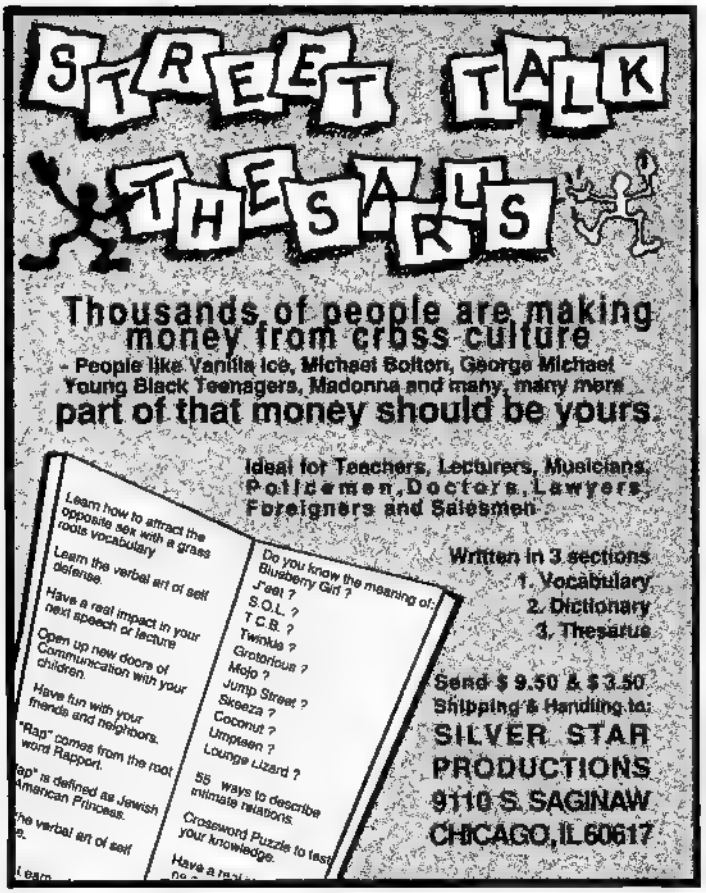
Why Do Birds Sing?

Slash/Reprise

Violent Femmes have long carried on the proud tradition of rockin' cool jerks without inspiring the respect accorded fellow geeks David Byrne and Jonathan Richman. You can bet your hat *Why Do Birds Sing?* won't up their credibility one iota. With its massive quantities of bitterness, fear, and other unhealthy emotions, this sour opus boasts the raw material of greatness. (See Elvis Costello or Del Shannon for details.) But the trio's trademarks—Gordon Gano's scraggly vocals and the loud acoustic guitars—now seem like shortcuts to a dead end. For all their

commendable attempts to capture a live feel, the crabby sarcasm of "More Money Tonight" (a put-down of rock stars, yawn) and the self-pitying "Used to Be" sound obvious and tired.

There are exceptions, including the cathartic rush of "I'm Free" and the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hot Velvety groove that wraps "Hey Nonny Nonny." Best of all, an aching cover of Culture Club's "Do You Really Want to Hurt Me?" offers a lesson in using bad vibes creatively, rather than just gorging on them. Better luck next time, fellas. *(available late June)*

Jon Young

BLAKE BABIES

Rosy Jack World
Mammoth

What's not to love about this Boston trio—especially after their second and best album, *Sunburn*, with the shockingly funny "Girl in a Box," and singer Juliana Hatfield's arch delivery of Iggy's "Loose" off *Earwig* (their first)? And the Blakes are on a roll. Just as that album followed ten months after *Earwig*, so this five-song issue comes snapping at the heels of their last.

But *Rosy Jack World* is not as great a departure as last time—rather, it crystallizes the melodic impetus of *Sunburn*. Despite moments of amateuristic doubt, the Blake Babies' songwriting keeps getting tighter while remaining honest. Highlights: a simultaneously cool and steamy cover of the Grass Roots' "Temptation Eyes"; and "Nirvana," the most vivid rendering to date of this band's signature mood of intelligent optimism. It's a good life. Open the sunroof and cruise. *(available mid-June)*

Sue Cummings

ZIGGY MARLEY AND THE MELODY MAKERS

Jahmekya
Virgin

Certainly it is remarkable that at 22 years old Ziggy Marley has already acquired the worldly calm that sweetened his father's most abullient work. But in fact, the Melody Makers' two previous Virgin albums so successfully mastered (and updated) Marley, Sr.'s heartbeat groove that proficiency became a liability; that sibling band members Cedella, Sharon, and Stephen were also so accomplished so young only made the yuppie-reggae tag easier to affix.

Fortunately the Marley work ethic has begun to pay off on *Jahmekya*. The synths'n'sampling of the lead-off "Raw Riddim" plots a street-beat manifesto that is further amended over the course of the album. All but gone is the untethered optimism of *Conscious Party*'s "Tomorrow People": Even the out-and-out party tracks (e.g., "First Night") are cut with ire. And Stephen has emerged as Keith to Ziggy's Mick—his lead vocal on the self-penned "Problem With My Woman" possesses a raw, hash-hued warmth. *Jahmekya* has its heart in the past, its feet in the present, and its eyes on the future—you might even call it rebel music. *(available mid-June)*

Alec Foege

LEADERS OF THE NEW SCHOOL

Future Without a Past
Elektra

SON OF BAZERK

Son of Bazerk Featuring No Self Control and the Band
S.O.U.L./MCA

At what is fast shaping up as a crucial fork in the rap road come two albums that set out alternate paths to the future. Son of Bazerk is a Bomb Squad brainchild, the product of the team that tops the short list of producers with distinctive talent—Marley Marl and Prince Paul come immediately to mind—so you know they're on the record before you read the liner notes. Leaders of the New School are a throwback to the long-ago time when hip hop happened on the stage rather than in the studio.

Conceptually, S.O.B. is an updated version of the Public Enemy tag team—hardly surprising on an album that boasts Hank Shocklee as executive producer. Chuck D is replaced by a funk band front man, Flavor Flav by a wild dancehall stylist. Both are singers, neither raps. The personality of each is defined almost entirely by the music; none of the lyrics are particularly memorable.

What makes this rap is the background: hard beats, layered samples, and the wholesale plundering of a record bin that includes everything from Led Zeppelin to punk to *a cappella* soul. The album's best tracks, "Change the Style" and "J-Dub Theme," combine and juxtapose en-

tire genres with thought and skill. Stripped of its conceptual coating, this is dance music with a rap brain.

Leaders of the New School is high-energy hip hop, equally at home in downtown headphones and uptown jeeps. Listening to the leaders made me remember the fateful day I first heard Doug E. Fresh. "Pinocchio's Theory" is like nothing so much as the late, great "The Show." Every freestyling line out of lead Leader Charlie Brown's mouth sounds like fun; I can't think of another rapper whose live performance would be a sure bet. Busta Rhymes brings a welcome touch of tight dancehall riddim to otherwise formless jams like "Sound of the Zeekers."

The concept here is simple: high school, with lots of talk from the stairwells and the lunchroom. The feel of the record, sloppy in places and silly in others, is not unlike De La Soul's debut. Though lacking in any greater complexity, this album recaptures some of the giddy joy of rap which is all too often buried by artists and producers under thick layers of concept, comment, and collage.

Now that I've managed to set up such a clean opposition between these two debuts, it is only fair to note that the Bomb Squad had a hand in both. Hank Shocklee schooled the Leaders in rhyme as they were coming up out on Long Island. Eric Sandler produced three of the tracks here, including the delightful "Just When You Thought You Were Safe," made delightful by its reference to killer bees.

If the Leaders sound more like Doug E. Fresh than PE, the range of samples is only slightly less broad. If Bazerk is more about musical high concept than lyrics, it is not hard to imagine "J-Dub" being played with pleasure in the dancehalls. These are two albums with opposite intentions, executed in both cases with intelligence and style. *(available mid-June)*

David Samuels

BILLY FALCON

Pretty Blue World

PolyGram

Billy Falcon wants to be Van Morrison, which is not necessarily a bad thing. I mean, Van Morrison at one point wanted to be Bob Dylan, and it seems to have worked for him. And while *Pretty Blue World* is no *Astral Weeks*, as singer-songwriter efforts go it's not an inauspicious record at all.

Falcon's songwriterly virtues lie in the simplicity of both his lyrics and his arrangements. There's not a lot of fancy wordplay here (thankfully), and the songs pretty much stick to basic rockish instrumentation. This approach supports the direct, emotional subject matter of his songs—love songs, nothing but love songs—and Falcon shows enough stylistic diversity to keep things interesting. *Pretty Blue World* falls short when its influences become too plain, but it's tough to develop an original voice all at once. Falcon's demonstrated talent bodes well for such development. *(available early July)*

Jim Greer

SPRINGHOUSE

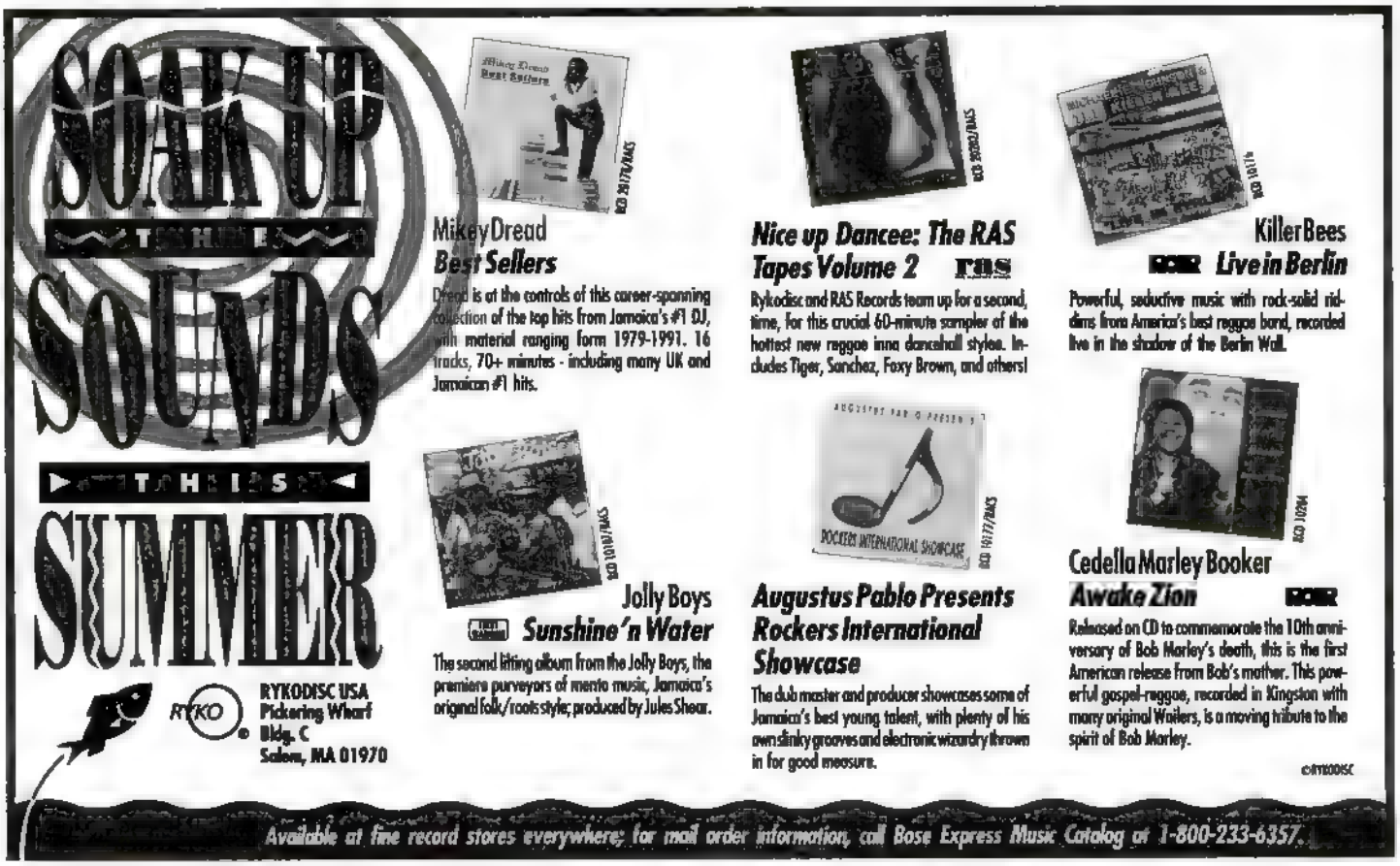
Land Falls

Caroline

Normally there isn't much I want to say about pop music. I either like it or it makes me want to throw up. And in recent years I've been reaching for the Maalox more frequently than my stereo's volume control.

But now there's Springhouse, a New York alternative pop trio whose debut LP, *Land Falls*, is a sweet-sounding treat in the world of New York noise.

The members of Springhouse hail from hardcore, folk pop, and performance art backgrounds. And while some of their new songs sound like poor outtakes from the *Pretty in Pink* soundtrack, the majority break free from pop conventions and move on to a unique, soothing, rich style. Songs like "Again," "Open Your Eyes," and "Alone" are good examples of Springhouse's uplifting melodies, flowing guitar, and generally innovative pop sense, all of which somehow manage to improve your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WORLD BEAT

Santana

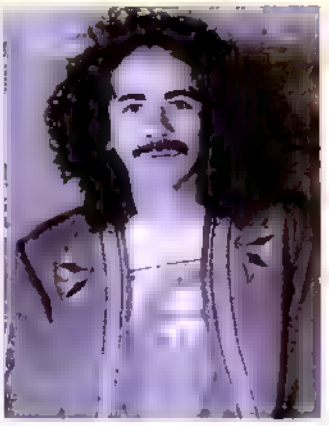
BY RICHARD GEHR

IN THE OPINION OF AT LEAST ONE ethnomusical know-it-all, no gig sparked the development of African pop music more than the appearance of Carlos Santana at the 1971 Soul to Soul concert in Ghana's capital city, Accra. Santana brought it all back home, fusing potent psychedelic godhead to intense double-time Afro-Cuban syncopations. But imagine the ramifications if he'd arrived two years later, with the supercharged New Santana Band heard on the recently reissued *Lotus* (Sony). An indispensable double CD recorded during a 1973 Japanese concert, *Lotus* is a magnificently played musical watershed bridging the gap between Hendrix's aural anarchy and James Brown's soul discipline. Coltrane's jazz, acid rock, Latin beats, African percussion rituals, and operatic drama all ride high on Devadip's blossoming mystical buzz.

For all his subsequent inconsistency, the Santana legacy persists in a thousand odd corners of the world. Just listen to the way Daniel Beaubrun's guitar snakes through Boukman Eksperyans's highly compelling *Vodou Adjae* (Mango). Life fairly sucks in Haiti, but Boukman's inspirational blend of *voudoun* drumming, countryside *rara* chants, and uptown *zouk*ish keyboards casts a densely arranged "upful" spin of such down-to-earth concerns as local ecocide, poverty, and the erosion of traditional Creole culture on the island.

Santana's electric maximalism took a strange twist during the 1970s, when Nigerian *fuji* developed out of the Islamic drum music called *asajiri*. *Fuji* equals juju minus guitars, sort of, although a lone Hawaiian steel guitar adds tropical C&W flavor to Chief Doctor Ayinde Barrister's *New Fuji Garbage* (GlobeStyle). Barrister named *fuji* after Japan's "mountain of love," while the "garbage" part takes the piss out of his detractors. The disc's two 30-minute tracks offer a relatively brief yet very suave introduction to the bands' typical six-hour marathons of praise songs, Yoruban advice, and the potent cross-rhythms produced by at least a dozen drummers. "We've had English for a hundred years," Barrister sings. "Now here's the real [*fuji*] fertilizer."

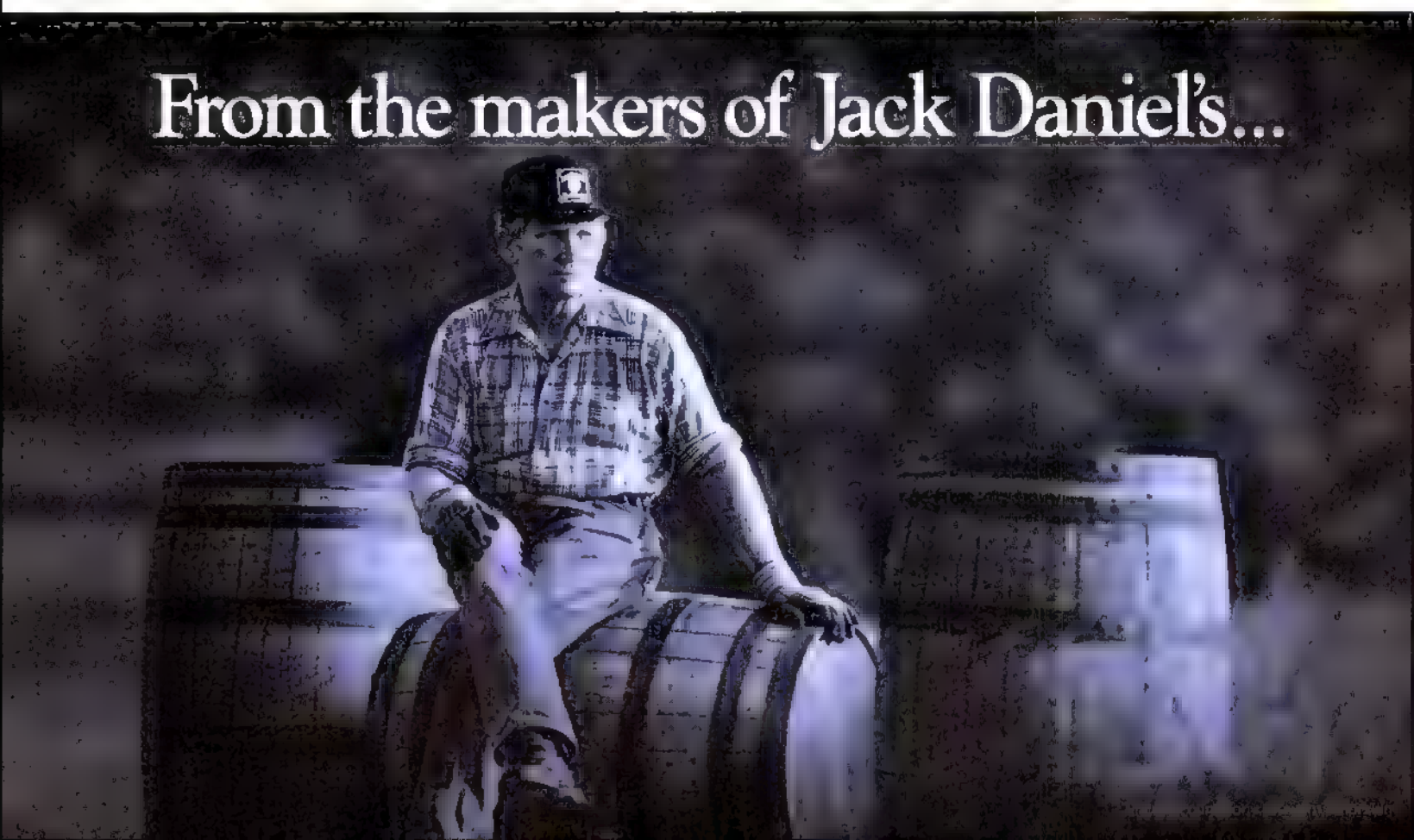
To the best of my knowledge, Santana has nothing to do with the Kenyan *taarab* played by Zein Musical Party of *The Style of Mombasa*. Recorded during two sweltering nights in leader Zein L'Abdin Ahmed Alamoody's living room, the disc features the inventive *'ud* virtuoso accompanied by keyboards, violin, and plenty of bongos. *Taarab* combines Indian and Arabic sound and gets its African kick from Swahili voices and dance rhythms, not to mention the occasional samba and cha-cha-cha. Recommended for weddings or as accompaniment to strong mint tea and casual conversation.



Afro-Cuban syncopator Carlos Santana.

COURTESY OF CBS RECORDS

Backbeats: Drumming and chanting doesn't get any deeper than in Jamaica's Nyabinghi Order, which counters gospel's spiritual orgiastics with hypnotic slow-motion reasonings. The sublimity of *Rastafari Elders* (RAS), however, lies almost entirely in the presence of Sista Bubbles, who adds unexpected feminist spunk to Bongo Shep, Ras Headful, and four other fiftysomething seers. . . . Look out for *Straight No Chaser*, the way reet British quarterly of "world jazz and jive."



mood, no matter what your mental state.

Then again, a good bottle of tequila would do the same. *(available mid-June)*

Daniel Fidler

THE ALARM

Raw

I.R.S.

Back in 1981 the Alarm was being hailed by some as the next Clash, but just as many were tagging the band as phony Clash poseurs. Ten years and many ups and downs later they've all but shed those labels and become just another intrepid rock'n'roll band from Wales. Which isn't too bad a thing, considering some of the overdubbed new wavish atrocities they released in the mid to late '80s (a fact they subtly admit on the nostalgic "Moments in Time").

The aptly titled *Raw* signifies a return to original form circa *Declaration*, but is smooth and grown-up as opposed to young and turbulent. Though mature, some of *Raw* is overly methodical, much too deliberate and downright uninteresting; but other parts are full of great licks and roots that Dylan and Young fans would, at the least, appreciate. Lead singer and guitarist Mike Peters—an attendee of the Bono school—is more passionate and self-assured with his own songs, as is evident on beautifully sweeping electro-acoustic hook-laden numbers like "The Wind Blows Away My Words." *(available mid-June)*

Dan McMinn

PSYCHEDELIC FURS

World Outside

Columbia

The first Psychedelic Furs record, way back in 1863 or whenever, was actually pretty good. Since then, the band has gone on a long, slow journey towards mediocrity, the nadir of which was probably 1987's *Midnight to Midnight*, a pointless, derivative exercise in how to make a pointless, derivative album. *Book of Days* from 1989 was an attempt to go "back to basics," which was a good idea badly executed (they got the sound right but forgot to write any songs)

None of which would matter if *World Outside* were any good—but it's not. It's not really bad, either, it's just dead boring, and boring is a cardinal pop sin. As on *Book of Days*, the idea seems to be to return to the wall-of-sound attack of the best early Furs, but over-reliance on slick '90s production values mutes whatever aggression these guys might yet be capable of mustering. Richard Butler's voice doesn't fit well around the love-my-way platitudes he's taken to spouting in place of the vitriolic anti-romantic diatribes he once spewed—he sounds tired rather than mature. Maybe the Furs should rest up before the next record. *(available late June)*

Jim Greer

TERMINATOR X AND VARIOUS ARTISTS

Terminator X and the Valley of the Jeep Beets

P.R.O. Division/Columbia

With music by Terminator X and production by the Bomb Squad's Carl Ryder, this potpourri of largely unknown performers is the vinyl version of a great block party backed by the world's best DJ. While some credit must go to a team of lyricists that includes Chuck D, the root of the album's appeal can be summed up in a single word: bass. Fluid, deep, and hard, it's enough to make you turn off the treble, lay back, and let your head roll around on your shoulders.

The best track on the album, "Homey Don't Play Dat," from Bonnie N' Clyde, is a nitro-powered jam featuring, you guessed it, the year's best bass. "Buck Whylin'," the much-played opening track from Chuck D and Sister Souljah, features a classic Chuck D rant backed by a minimal metal riff that sounds suspiciously like something Matt Dike did on *Paul's Boutique*. Hardcore Sister Souljah fans may enjoy her attempt to translate Chuck's edge-of-doom style into a woman's voice; the rest of you may find it obnoxious. Runner-up honors go to the odd but enjoyable "Wanna Be Dancin' " from Celo of the Casino Brothers, and the self-titled track from Juvenile Delinquintz.

The artistic success of this album makes the prospect of similar compilations appealing, allowing producers an array of vocal styles to play with and giving talented new artists a chance at mainstream exposure. *(available mid-June)*

David Samuels

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BOTTLED AT THE DISTILLERY

BY JEFFERSON MORLEY

Bob Dylan

(Or, What Bob Dylan Can Teach You About the Unfinished War in Iraq)

DO YOU REALLY NEED *58* MORE Bob Dylan songs in your life? I do, but then I think Bob Dylan is the most important figure in American culture since World War II, rivaled only by the likes of Martin Luther King, Jr., and John Lennon. To those of us who make Dylan's music a habit of social conciousness, our aural addiction is part of what makes life worth living. In one exuberant gospel rock tribute to the Lord, Dylan sings, "You came in like the wind / Like Errol Flynn / You changed my life." I don't know about you or Him or Errol Flynn, but Dylan changed *my* life.

The latest batch of Dylan's music is called the *Bootleg Series: Volume 1–3*, a three-CD (or three-cassette) collection of music Dylan recorded between 1961 and 1989. Future volumes of the *Bootleg Series* will reportedly cover a legendary live concert from 1966.

The music found here took a little while to grow on me, as Dylan's music often does. Of the 20 previously released songs on *The Bootleg Series* only two strike me as clearly superior to the originals: a sorrowful "Idiot Wind" which improves on the bitter rant version that disrupts *Blood on the Tracks*. And the marvelously easygoing "Someone's Got a Hold of My Heart," which is a rougher, more soulful version of "Tight Connection to My Heart," the song that led off Dylan's 1985 *Empire Burlesque*. But then again, there are half a dozen brilliant versions of brilliant Dylan songs that are neither better nor worse than one another, only different. I especially liked a sweet demo version of "Every Grain of Sand," one of Dylan's deepest and most humane songs. In the background, a dog can be heard barking, which only enhances the humanity of Dylan's singing.

Of the 38 previously unreleased songs on this collection, 25 are from Dylan's early-'60s prerock, folkie stage. These songs, which dominate Volume 1, reminded me (as I have been reminded many times before) that young Bob was a precocious, witty fellow with a powerful vision and a remarkable style. "Paths of Victory" is accurately described in the accompanying guide book as the best Woody Guthrie song that Dylan ever wrote. But these acoustic ballads also left me convinced that Dylan's genius began when he plugged in his electric guitar in early 1965.

Volume 2, covering 1965 to 1974, will interest devout Dylanists but not many others. The primitive takes ("If Not for You") and botched songs ("She's Your Lover Now") are filler from the studio floor. The solo rehearsal versions of "Like a Rolling Stone," and "Subterranean Homesick Blues" are curiousities for collectors. In the mid-1960s Dylan was one with the emerging commercial rock culture. Virtually all of his best music seems to have found its way onto his albums, especially *Highway 61 Revisited* and *Blonde on Blonde*.

Not so since the mid-1970s, the period covered by the last three songs on Volume 2 and all of Volume 3. These songs make a convincing case that Dylan's singing and songwriting powers were as great in the '70s and '80s as in the '60s.

Dylan's problem is partly that, whether out of insecurity or arrogance, he is often indifferent to his own talent. Some of his commercially released albums have been carelessly produced, and Dylan's commercially released music has not always been well-served by the economics of the record industry. Volume 3 of the *Bootleg Series* suggests that the vinyl disc format was a handicap to Dylan's music. A double-sided LP record holds about forty-five minutes of music, an easy to digest but arbitrary length of time, and producing double albums is not often a commercially lucrative proposition. Volume 3 contains five songs cut from *Infidels*—one of Dylan's very best albums—all of which would have complemented and amplified the original album.

Infidels was, as its title proclaimed, Dylan's first post-Christian album. He had become a born-again Christian in 1979, alienating the '60s dogmatists and drinking deeply in the rivers of the African-American gospel tradition. Then Dylan began to feel the savagery of the contemporary world overwhelming the relative optimism of his Christian faith. In 1982–83, he moved from fundamentalist Christianity to fundamentalist Judaism and finally to an angry, disillusioned faith. In April 1983, he recorded *Infidels*.

On one level, *Infidels* is an account of one man's spiritual changes. On another, it is a prophetic commentary on the political world of the 1980s, especially the Middle East. In the years to come, I imagine young people will seek to understand why America came to wage an astonishingly bloody war in Iraq in early 1990. They could do much worse than to listen to *Infidels* and *Empire Burlesque* 10 or 12 times. The final exam could consist of questions like: Listen to Dylan spit out the chorus of "Neighborhood Bully." Is the neighborhood bully to whom he refers the Israeli government, Saddam Hussein, or American geopoliticians like Henry Kissinger and George Bush? All of the above?

If the five outtakes found on Volume 3 are restored to *Infidels*, an album that is merely great becomes something almost astonishing. In its commercially released form, *Infidels* is a harsh and painful album, ugly in its intensity and its contempt for those (like Dylan) who had been duped by the respectable world. On "Union Sundown," a song that disturbed the politically correct crowd, Dylan sang, "Democracy don't rule the world / Get that through your head / This world is ruled by violence / But that's better left unsaid."

The five songs that Dylan left off the album are of a more personal, vulnerable, and nurturing aspect of his vision. In retrospect, it seems as if he didn't want to go soft on the listener. But these "softer" songs amplify and expand the already remarkable personal and political vision of the album.

There are three marvelous love songs and two harsher sermons on the state of the world. The first is the "Foot of Pride," a weird, throbbing, tuneless tale of the funeral of an ambitious man, a retired businessman named Red who is cast out of heaven and who sells tickets to plane crashes and

Bob Dylan: 58 more songs and a hope for redemption.

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"sings 'Amazing Grace' all the way to the Swiss bank." It's like Dylan imagined Ollie North and the Iran-*contra* gang before they ever became public. It's a tale that mocks the powerful, the faithful, and the deluded alike. "Ain't no going back, when the foot of pride comes down," Dylan wails. Ain't no going back.

The song's poetic truth has only deepened since it was written in 1983. The foot of American pride came down on Saddam Hussein, the most obvious (but not the only) candidate for neighborhood bully. About 100,000 people died in 40 biblical days of high- and low-tech violence. An unknown percentage of these people were children. At least half of them must have been unarmed civilians who disliked Saddam's dictatorship more than half a dozen *Nightline* commentators combined.

The American people seemed to exult in victory, then grew baffled. The plight of the Kurds exposed what George Bush wanted left unsaid: that violence rules the world. Now American soldiers are camping in northern Iraq and the realization is sinking in that the war in Iraq is not over. It's just beginning. "Ain't no going back when the foot of pride comes down."

The extremes of rage and love, loathing and egotism that drive Dylan's *Infidels* are reconciled in a simple blues song called "Blind Willie McTell." Mark Knopfler of Dire Straits, one of Dylan's ablest collaborators, picks out a simple blues melody while Dylan plays the piano. The last chorus goes, "Well God is in his heaven and we all want what's his / But power and greed and corruptible seed seem to be all that there is / I'm gazing out the window of the St. James Hotel / And I don't know why / No one can sing the blues like Blind Willie McTell."

"Blind Willie McTell" is the lament of a shrewd, ambitious, rich, and occasionally ridiculous white rock'n'roll artist looking out at a world "condemned all the way from New Orleans to Jerusalem." It is the moral of the story of an unnamed land that was born in racial violence and grew up to be the neighborhood bully of 1991, too powerful, too greedy, too corruptible to know that it lacks even a lonely, ignored blues singer to redeem its shame and failure. Instead of Blind Willie McTell, we have these 58 songs and a hope for redemption.

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Antihero

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goes to show you how starved people are.

SPIN: How do you feel about Sting?

Robbie: Oh God.

SPIN: No, really.

Robbie: You could devote a whole tome to Sting. Sting is really talented. He's one of the best singers alive. But we're living in an age where being a good singer isn't enough anymore.

SPIN: I thought you said earlier that you hated Sting.

Robbie: I do. I despise him.

SPIN: Why?

Robbie: Because he, like most artists right now, feel like they have to supplant their actual output by subscribing to some painless cause and hope that it fills the gaps where their music doesn't quite hit. If you don't like Sting's music you have to say, "Well, you got to like the guy because he is trying to save the rain forest." My personal opinion is that if he wants to save the rain forest he should go to Brazil and get a shovel and start to work. What cracked me up was when the Clash did *Sandinista!*, and there they were in New York City recording and fucking all these girls and getting drunk. I've been out with Mick Jones at afterhours bars in London at three in the morning and I can assure you that the last thing on his mind was the Sandinistas. It's admirable to call attention to social and political issues but it's not acceptable for an artist to build their careers by exploiting their issues for their own profit. I mean if you really care about political causes you don't play a guitar, you don't play drums or sing about it, you go out and do something about it. Otherwise it's just another form of publicity. And it serves as a distraction from the music—a distraction that I think is intentional. Just like video. If the music isn't sexy, throw some girls in there. Throw some dancers in there.

You see, that's the problem with everything that I'm talking about. All the conclusions that I come to you can just say, "Well, what difference does it make? It's just entertainment, it's just music." I'll tell you what difference it makes. For some person who's tried their whole life to sound good and here comes some nonsense like Deee-Lite, or Paula Abdul, and they say, "Why do I bother?" The victim is music. Because for every success of someone without any ability, it means that someone who has tried really hard to be something says, Fuck it, why bother? And you think it doesn't happen? It happens. It really fucking happens. And it eats away at your soul. Why do you think James Brown is half insane? He's half insane because he's never ever gotten the recognition that he deserved while he was doing it. In retrospect, yeah. It's very flattering and everything but here's a guy busting his ass working three million days a year for no money. He's nuts—why is he nuts? You made him nuts. You think it's alright to give him a fucking plaque and an award and to sample his records and that's okay? It's not okay. The guy's nuts. We made him nuts. And it's all laziness. Art at the end of the day has to be moving at the least and at its best it has to be cathartic. Like with rap, who cares if somebody can talk fast? And I'm not anti-rap. It's just that it's gotten so redundant and boring. If ten rap groups do the same song about inequality with the same theme, it nullifies the point. It just becomes noise. It's what white, hip college kids listen to because it's cool. I don't have to like something because it makes me feel guilty.

SPIN: Are you saying that some white people's glorification of rap is affected by a sense of guilt—that buying it assuages a sense of guilt?

Robbie: Absolutely. Abso-fucking-lutely.

SPIN: Do you think the industry is conscious of this and plays on it?

Robbie: It's obvious isn't it? I don't want to seem anti-rap because I'm not. My first hit was a rap record. But I think people have got to get beyond this cultural and sociological guilt in order to get to the next step which is making music that people care about, because ultimately it's about music. The music has to be interesting. For instance I like Public Enemy because their music is intentionally claustrophobic and upsetting and it hurts. And the good thing about them is the samples they use are not immediately recognizable. It's not like M.C. Hammer doing a loop of Rick James. I'm not anti-sampling. I'm not at all, but when you take somebody else's song and somebody else's riff and somebody else's idea because you can't come up with anything better, I'm sorry, I don't buy it. To me it's lazy minded and it's one more symptom of the decay of music in general. Basically, I think that rap is dying, and Vanilla Ice is the first nail in the coffin. With everyone exploring the same exact theme with no one coming up with any original music, it's got to die.

"Once they decide to make someone happen, the machine is in motion, and once the machine is in motion, it's gonna work."

Rap is a great form of expression. It's a nonelitist way for people who can't do music to make it. All those things are good. The thing is it's feeding on itself and killing itself through the redundant production methods that it's using. What was great about those early rap records was that there was a melodic content to them, they were music at the same time. The rap worked with the music and the music worked with the rap. One was never eclipsed by the other. It was still a record. And it moved people because the cadences of the rap were as musical as the music itself. And both of them together combined to create an orchestral effect. Arthur [Baker] and I proved with "Planet Rock" that musicality in rap doesn't have to obscure the message. In fact, I think the best rap record ever done was "The Message" by Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five. Early rap was great music. It was observatory and judgmental in the best way possible. And assertive and aggressive and angry without being inflammatory. It's *easy* to be inflammatory. You can put down anyone or you can blame anyone for your problems. It's very fucking simple. But it's really hard to observe and get angry and to stop short of being inflammatory. That is, to make people angry for the sake of getting them on your side. If you're good enough at what you're doing you'll just say it. Which is why ultimately Spike Lee fails. Because the only way he succeeds is through guilt.

The bottom line is if you embrace people with mediocre talents as being successful you can convince yourself that some day you can have it too. I think a lot of it started with the punk movement. I was reading an article by Lisa Robinson in the [*New York*] *Post*. She was writing about how the Dolls intentionally tried to sound bad, because that was their style. Have things gotten so bad that journalists have to revise musical history? They sounded bad because they couldn't play their instruments. Which was fine, because they were fun. Punk really was a reaction against all these technogroups—Genesis, and Emerson, Lake and Palmer because people had had it with rock becoming so ridiculous and so rococo. But it doesn't mean that the reaction was any better than what they were reacting against. It doesn't mean that people who couldn't write and couldn't sing or play should have record deals.

SPIN: Right. It's like revolutions: They always seem like a great idea at the time, but then the fallout of the revolution evolves into a new form of tyranny.

Robbie: Absolutely. Patti Smith didn't have a hit until "Because the Night." A song Bruce Springsteen cowrote. And everybody says they like the Velvet Underground, but frankly no one knew who Lou Reed was until David Bowie produced *Transformer*.

SPIN: So you think that punk really just punctured the talent balloon in a way. That our musical value system just bottomed out and suddenly we said bad is good, ignorance is truth—that kind of thing. And then after that we couldn't really recover—and we still haven't recovered?

Robbie: It was really a tyrannical reaction to people not being able to participate but what that did in turn was make it impossible for people who had more *ability* to participate. And in turn that made it impossible for people without the right kind of haircut and the aloof kind of look to get record deals. Janis Joplin became sexy when she sang—otherwise she was as plain if not plainer than most of the people who bought her records. But when she opened her mouth and sang she was gorgeous and sexy and everyone desired her. I would love to see a 50-year-old folk guitarist get signed, or a 16-year-old prodigy. I'd love to see people dancing to Thelonious Monk in a disco. You want to talk about freedom—about being able to dance the way you want to—imagine being able to dance to a polyrhythmic song without drums. If the groove is really in the heart people should be able to step out of bounds a bit and dance to music with shifting rhythms and changing orchestrations—variations in sounds and colors that take them away and make them higher, not dumber. I really believe that people can dance and think about their lives at the same time. And I'm going to start making music again, that people can sing to on their way home from the club and think about as they're taking their clothes off to go to bed. I'm going to try it all and if the groove is really in the heart it will work. ◉

Newport

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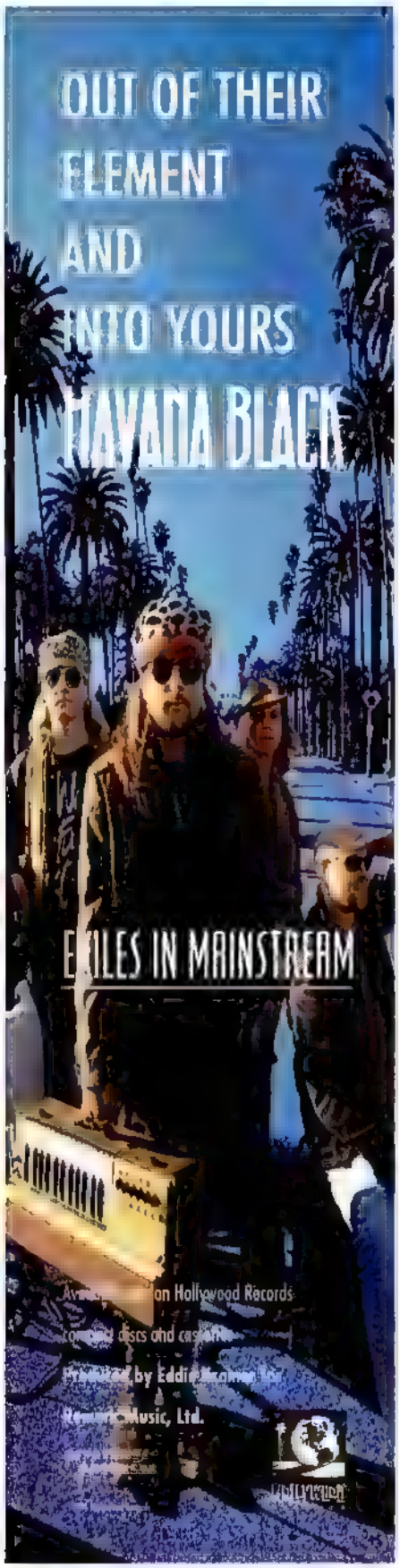

AIDS

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which I was even more infatuated with—both by itself and mixed with coke. And I continued to share needles when there weren't enough to go around.

Fortunately for me, before I was too far gone a counselor from San Francisco's outreach program visited a friend of mine. She saw me shooting up in his kitchen and quickly instructed me that I'd better clean his works with bleach if I was going to share them or if I wasn't sure they were really new. That's when I learned about the danger of AIDS for IV drug users.

From then on, I always cleaned my needles. I bought my own works and shared them only safely (and reluctantly, with people who had something that I really wanted). I taught everyone I knew who shot up how to protect themselves, and spent hours writing letters to newspapers and trying to be heard on this crucial subject.

Some sociologists call needle-sharing a "subcultural ritual." They theorize that the sharing is a part of the high and addicts will never give it up until they give up drugs. But most addicts will give many reasons why they'd rather not share. One main reason is that if you shoot someone else's blood, you can get a "bone-crusher," an agonizing physical reaction, where you suddenly shake uncontrollably, get chills, and feel like you're being punched all over your body.

Also, needles get dull with repeated use, and since most addicts have scars on their veins, it's best to keep the sharpest point possible—which is hard to do if you keep passing your spike around.

And of course now we have AIDS to worry about. Not to mention hepatitis and endocarditis. So the truth is that addicts share needles only out of necessity.

A popular myth about addicts is that they are suicidal, and therefore unconcerned with their health. And to the outsider that's how it looks: Drugs have made the users emaciated, shaky, homeless, jobless, and prone to disease, landing in jail, or worse.

But when you're on the inside drugs seem like the solution, not the problem. Drugs offer anesthesia against the world's ills. When I was using I didn't want to die—I wanted to live pain free. My denial blinded me to what drugs were doing to me. But at some level I managed to stay sane enough to realize there was no reason to expose myself to AIDS.

Because drugs will only probably kill you. But AIDS will almost certainly kill you.

And cleaning a needle is far easier than using a condom properly. In order to prevent a needle clogging, you rinse it with water after a shot anyway. To rinse it with bleach takes maybe two minutes—two minutes that can save lives. And cleaning doesn't interfere with the "high" the way a condom does with sexual intercourse.

As a recovering addict, the idea that "sending a message" about drug use is more valuable than saving my life outrages me. The counselor from San Francisco taught me to protect myself and because of her, I stayed safe long enough to realize that drugs were killing me rather than making life bearable. I was able to recover from one life-threatening illness—which had left me weighing 80 pounds and covered with tracks—without having to deal with a second.

There's a growing movement toward needle exchange which has been gathering momentum over the last few years. Many programs have been started by volunteers such as Jon Parker, who has challenged the laws in 8 of the 11 states in which non-prescribed syringes are illegal. He was arrested in five, but won support from local authorities in the other three. Parker has spurred New Haven to start a legal needle exchange, and gained support for one in Baltimore. Parker was also involved in a needle-exchange arrest in Redwood City, California, which started the same day as the New York trial, but ended in a mistrial when it was revealed that one of the jurors was the father of an addict. Activists like Parker and ACT UP have a long history in public health, where unpopular measures have often been taken in defiance of the law by concerned citizens who were vilified at the time, but later honored.

As this goes to press, the decision on the New York trial is pending. Activists feel that a victory here could be a turning point in terms of gaining public acceptance and support, but say that either way they will continue their work.

And they don't have to look far for evidence that they are having a positive effect. The first time I saw Erin, a needle-exchange regular, she reminded me of how I had looked: painfully thin, wired on coke, pale and unkempt. She had stayed up all night to meet the Lower East Side needle exchangers because "They were the only decent thing in my life. They listened to me, and they had the best works."

The next time I saw her I didn't recognize her. She was 74 days clean and had met a woman at needle exchange who helped get her into recovery. She'd put on 25 pounds, her eyes had life in them, and she was smiling.

"Eventually," she said, "I want to do needle exchange."

RU-486

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distribute the drug in England, Scandinavia, and the Netherlands. "When England gets RU-486, the chance of a black market will double," says Sharon Camp of the Population Crisis Committee, a Washington, D.C., public-interest group. "Compared to back-alley abortions, black market RU-486 is safe."

"Unfortunately," she says, "not everyone in this country has access to safe and legal abortion. Because of parental consent laws, some minors are seeking dangerous abortions." Camp considers unapproved capsules of RU-486 "a better illegal method."

Despite the obstacles, there is little doubt that RU-486 will eventually be marketed in the U.S. Demand for the pill, like any other epoch-making scientific discovery, will simply overpower the red tape that has blocked it so far. "Science drives history," Kangas says. "You can't turn it back."

Electronic

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sooner stay at home. When you first start, money has to be the prime consideration. That's not the way it has to be anymore."

Of his hiatus from New Order, the singer says, "If you're in a group with four other people sometimes you just want to get away. But you can't because you upset others. And that has to be considered. It's not like you hate them, it's just that you sometimes need some space. But even then people tend to jump in and go, 'Oh, the group Electronic.' This isn't a permanent thing.... I suppose it was incredibly naive of me to think we could release records through the back door of Factory without anybody really noticing. After 'Getting Away With It' we realized we never really would get away from that pressure thing."

Although they chose Neil Tennant of the Pet Shop Boys to front the "Getting Away With It" single, Marr maintains that there is no supergroup self-indulgence here, citing instead David Bowie's collaborations with Iggy Pop as a model. Whatever, this new-age power trio, a kind of freshly whipped Cream, seduced almost everybody with that near saccharine-sweet melody.

Sumner's distinctive lyrical style often involves songs which start out bleak and personal until he throws an ironic spanner in the works. If lines like this make you laugh, they are doing their job: "Look at me, I always get the blame." Sifting through another failing relationship on "The Patience of a Saint," he shows the petulance of a child to bed: "Why should I care? I'd rather watch drying paint."

"First, I start off with a serious idea," he explains. "Then I go off to the pub and have a drink. Then I come back and go, 'What the fuck is this?' and try and bend it a bit." Sumner laughs. "I am not a miserable fucker," he insists. "It's just that I always seem to be doing interviews with a hangover."

Marr believes that such interviews are a chance to clear up half the misunderstandings which surround the group. "People just see Bernard as this really earnest, insular character, but I get it worse. Because of the Smiths, people think I'm really into the past. They think I have an old '60s jukebox in the bedroom and a guitar-shaped swimming pool, with pictures of Elvis all over the house. They're surprised I'm involved in a modern group like Electronic—like I've suddenly burned all my Beatles records. But I'm into what's happening now. I don't understand all that retro stuff, people plugging into crappy old amps so they can get a 1965 sound."

I close with the inevitable Manchester question. It's like it's all over. It's like now is the time to evaluate just what has been pushed out into the world. "I can't see the wood for the trees. I've just spent two full years enjoying it," says Sumner. "But it's good to see your mates doing well. It's good to see a load of scumbags you met at a party driving round in a BMW."

I leave them to the sunshine, their cars, and the good life that confirms there's more to Britain than London. Sumner smiles. What he says sounds like something he might sing: "I'm surprised that so many good things have happened to us. I expect the worst all the time. If you look on the dark side and something good happens, it can be twice as good." ✪

Pere Ubu

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were going to change the face of music," says Thomas. "It was our duty to move the thing forward a step. That's why I think the movement ended tragically, because it never happened. Maybe that's a good thing." In 1987, the group reformed, and was quickly supported by a deal through the U.K. branch of Phonogram Records, where it remains.

"It has had an effect, because we're working in a much more corporate realm. You have to know how corporations work, and to a degree you have to play along. It doesn't affect the way we write songs, but we try to make everything essential. Now we edit considerably. I enjoy the discipline of editing, mainly because I've never done it.

"Youth tends to see things in a more romantically dark way," Thomas continues. "As we grew older, we realized that there was another side to the coin. I'm not sure that we're necessarily optimistic now: We're not pessimistic, but I'm not sure we're optimistic. There's a lot on the new record that is tragic, but clearly dwelling on tragedy is not good. There is a power in lamentation, a validity to it, but we try to stay within the boundaries of helpfulness." ✪

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This Land Is Our Land

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downstairs in a few minutes; naturally, if John Johnson was coming over, or wanted me to meet him someplace, I wouldn't be able to see her for the drink. I hoped she understood. After a while the phone rang.

"This is John Johnson," he said. "Listen, I got people calling me from all over da country who wanna interview me." That was strange, I thought—he was the one who had persistently called us, not the other way around. "The reason I hadda call you back is because I was just on the phone wit' Frank Weimann. He's the guy who introduced me to Alan Sonnenschein of *Penthouse* magazine. Ya ever heard of Alan Sonnenschein?"

"Ah . . . no," I said.

He snorted with disbelief. "Frank Weimann says that Alan Sonnenschein of *Penthouse* is offering me fifteen thousand dollars for an interview wit' me, ya unnerstan' what I'm saying? Frank Weimann just told me, Lookit, if I do that article wit' you, I'm jeopardizing the situation wit' *Penthouse*. He's gonna speak to Peter Bloch—ya ever hear of Peter Bloch?—and he's gonna get me fifteen thousand dollars. I can't jeopardized somethin' like that. But if I was gonna meet you—"

"Yes? Yes?"

"Then I would have ta meet you in public. Or if you was gonna come to my house, I would ax you to bring a friend."

I was somewhat baffled. "I spoke to you on the phone yesterday," I said. "I've been trying to call you for five hours. I tried to send you a message, that your phone was out of order."

"Ya didn't come all this way ta see me! Ya said ya gonna go out wit' your friends now!"

"Just—for a drink, downstairs," I said weakly. "I don't even know these people."

The woman meeting me for a drink called me from the lobby. I gave up and went downstairs. We drove over to Sixth Street. A toothless man was selling greasy tubes of pink meat from a stand with a sign that said MAYOR JOHN JOHNSON NO NEW TAXES. The streets were crowded with college-student types, but nobody was buying any hot dogs.

At ten the next morning I tried John Johnson again. A woman answered the phone. "I'm his wife," she said with a heavy Spanish accent. She sounded sympathetic. "He's not here. He went out last night and no' come back yet. Yesterday, he come home at five in the afternoon, he out all night. I theenk maybe he get seeck. So he take the phone off the hook and he go to sleep. At nine-thirty he wake up—and tha's when we got your message, the Flash-o-Gram."

"The what?'" I said nervously, and quickly changed the subject. A Flash-o-Gram? The woman said I was sending a singing telegram. "I came all this way—" I said. "Just to interview him. He called and asked to be interviewed. It took me all day to get here. I don't know anybody here."

I don't know why I said that. "I don't know anybody here either," she said. "And we been nine years except to say hi to the man at the supermarket."

He wasn't home at twelve, at one, at three. "I guess he's out," his wife said sadly. "On the campaign trail."

At last I drove to his neighborhood. Brown tract houses, all exactly alike. It looked like the setting for one of those true-crime novels where in ordinary America suburbia terrible events were occurring in the basement of the house next door. "They've been here five years," an overweight neighbor said. She had come out to see what I was doing, parked in a car in front of her house. Behind her a dachshund peered out of the window with the same expression of nosy interest. "We were shocked when it hit the news. *Why would a person in the Federal Witness Security Program run for mayor?* All day long he stands on the pass over the highway holding up a sign, wearing an American flag and causing traffic accidents. But he's never once said hello to us. And his wife: I've only seen her once. A beautiful woman—she came out to pet my daughter's dog. Otherwise, nobody's ever seen her."

I did try John Johnson one last time, from the airport. "He come home!" his wife said happily. "He sleeping now." It was seven at night.

I NEVER DID MEET JOHN JOHNSON. HE came in dead last out of seven candidates in the election, pulling in an amazing 496 votes: amazing that 496 people voted for him.

A few days later I thought about his wife, how lonely she had sounded on the phone. That was the story here—not some mad hustler desperate for attention, deluding himself about magazine and movie offers—but a woman who for nine years, maybe longer, had been trapped in that madness. ⊛

Massive Attack

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which the group's eclectic mix of vocal satellites (Shara Nelson, Horace Andy, and Tricky Kid) floats. It's a loose-fit philosophy that works, seemingly without effort, and keeps Massive Attack fresher than the rest—a "Madchester"-weary music press have had a field day.

"Contrary to popular belief, we did do half the album in London," complains 3-D gently. "A lot of these critics romanticize that we wrote, recorded, and mixed everything in the depths of the English heartland. And then, after years in the wilderness, turned up in London on the back of a cart with straw hanging out of our mouths."

Bristol, though, it does have that laid-back atmosphere where everybody knows your name. "It is like that," concedes 3-D, "although we don't hang out with each other all the time. The town's really easygoing—you could stay unemployed for the whole of your life down there and probably get away with it, you know? You couldn't do that in London. In Bristol, you can be yourself more easily, take time out to get where you want to go. In London, the hectic vibes rub off on the music—you've got all these people running around with their tongues hanging out, desperate for a hit. We've never been like that."

"That's right," agrees G. "In London everyone's caught up in the whirlwind of the music business and the demands of instant success. Individuality is always going to be a casualty in a situation like that—we don't want to be so disposable."

For a crew that's spent so much time with their noses pressed up against America, Massive Attack is fetchingly ambivalent about the interest soon to be visited upon the band."Hanging out in Los Angeles earlier this year was magical," declares 3-D, "the whole atmosphere and all that. The influence the States has had on us is immense, so it'd be great to be appreciated there. But we've still got that old punk thing of success on our terms. Not in terms of shunning the limelight, but of not wanting to be restricted, of being allowed to continually evolve." "We want recognition more than success really," chips in Mushroom. "And longevity," asserts G. "I just hope people there aren't going to be lazy and equate what we're about with Soul II Soul. We really admire what they've done, but we do things totally different from them. We're not out to conquer the world—for instance, we want to go on tour as a sound system 'cause that's where we come from. There's no point in turning everything into a circus. Do that, and you'll lose the vibe." ⊛

Fishbone

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ain't gonna be influenced by Sly Stone?"

Chris declares that he thinks Angelo, Fishbone's lead singer, sounds just like Sly at times, and this leads us into a discussion of something we can all agree upon. Both guys seem elated when they tell me that Sly has been clean for a long time, and that he has a great new album ready for release. I tell them that when I saw the Family Stone for the first time in the '60s, the onstage blend of black and white, male and female, and James Brown meets the Fab Four led me to really believe that *the* revolution had finally begun.

"Black people have contributed so much to this country, and there hasn't been credit given where credit is due."

"Yes," agrees Kendall. "Because if you can bring everybody together, you're gonna get where everybody's coming from. Everyone says, 'Oh, Fishbone seems to be on this heavy black trip.' We are. But at the same time, we're not exclusionary or separatist. We want everyone to come to our shows. We've always been this way. It's not bullshit. We really want to embrace humanity. But we have to take the first steps together. So then Axl Rose won't stand onstage and call us *nigger*. You need to *learn* before you pop off with this shit. There's too many black people that use the word *nigger* in a derogatory fashion, too. We all have a lot to learn. This is earth. We all live here even though we know that the system is set up to keep us apart. But if we learn about one another, maybe we can tear this shit down!" ⊛

Frank Zappa

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worked in a nerve gas company?

Zappa: Well it wasn't nerve gas, it was mustard gas.

SPIN: Is it true he volunteered to be an experiment?

Zappa: That was a way during the war you could earn extra money, you could be a human guinea pig for these things called pap tests. They wouldn't tell you what it was, they would put stuff on your skin and then cover it up with a big bandage. So he'd have these big bandages on his arm, and sometimes come home with two or three on his arms, and they'd itch and burn, and he'd suffer with these things, but they'd be thirty dollars more a week. And I don't know what they put on it.

SPIN: What was it like growing up in that environment—how aware of that were you?

Zappa: I thought I understood it pretty well at five or six years old. It was about killing people. My father worked at a place that manufactured stuff to kill people.

SPIN: And how did that affect you. Looking back now, forty-five years later, how did it affect you?

Zappa: That was WWII. There was a reason for going out and doing these things. Everybody has a different outlook. And the other thing was that he was a Sicilian, and it was not a good idea to be of a Sicilian or Italian extraction at that point in American history; he had to try extra hard to be patriotic, I think.

SPIN: How does that affect you today?

Zappa: It gives me some kind of perspective of how long we've been doing these things. At least forty to forty-five years.

SPIN: What did you think of punk?

Zappa: Well I liked the attitude of punk, I didn't necessarily like it from a musical standpoint; it is anti-musical. The whole idea was we're gonna play shitty and fast and so what? The so what part I always like. But anybody who's against music I don't like. I don't like people who smash instruments. I don't like the abuse of things that could produce beautiful results.

SPIN: Did you find any punk musically good? What about the Clash?

Zappa: One of my favorite punk records was "Gidget Goes to Hell" by the Suburban Lawns—I thought that was good.

SPIN: Did you ever make any punk records?

Zappa: Oh sure, yeah.

SPIN: You made punk records?

Zappa: Not whole records, but some punk tunes: "I'm So Cute" on the *Sheik Yerbouti* album.

SPIN: What do you think about the sexism in heavy metal, and in Andrew Dice Clay routines, and in rap? How do you relate that to the criticism against you in the past, the way you allegedly depicted women in your songs?

Zappa: I don't think there's anything wrong with depicting women the way I depict them. I think I depict them in a rather accurate way. Because women are not perfect. But the bulk of my songs are about men and the stupid things that men do. And they never complain. So, is it because the men are so inferior—which then proves the women's point, that they're so fucking stupid they don't know what to do, or they're too lazy to complain—or is it because the women think they really should get special treatment and they should be treated with kid gloves, like Israel sort of? You could never say anything bad about Israel or people would say you're anti-Semitic. If you happen to say that Israel behaves like Nazi Germany toward the Palestinians, which happens to look like quite a fact when you see a videotape of what's actually going on, people go "Oh, you're anti-Semitic." You know, it's not true. The same way, if you say "Women do this thing that's stupid or that thing that's stupid," you should say it. It's a journalistic medium as well as a musical medium.

SPIN: What's the thing you've been most criticized for, in sexist terms?

Zappa: "Jewish Princess" [from *Sheik Yerbouti*]. The criticism came from an organized entity, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai Brith. As if to say there was no such thing as a Jewish Princess. Like I invented this? They asked me to apologize. I said no. I told them I wouldn't. And they managed to get PR for their organization for a year out of me. And actually it helped me. The *Sheik Yerbouti* album turned out to be the best-selling album I ever had.

SPIN: Do you think the outcome of the censorship movement can ultimately be meaningful?

Zappa: Let me point out something about democracy. Does anybody remember how Hitler took over Germany? He was voted in. People said, Yeah, he's got the right message for us. Now when you have democracy, there's always the possibility that the guy who could turn out to be the biggest menace to the planet could just get voted in. And the place where it's most likely to happen is here, because of the media saturation, the illiteracy rate of the population, the social desperation of the population. Hitler came to power because things weren't so good.

All we have to do is look at the early days of the Reagan administration and see how these factors converged. First of all, he owed a big favor to all the fundamentalist Christians and the television evangelists who helped him one way or another get elected. Forget about the October Surprise, he also had the help of these other groups. Then there was that depression. Americans like to believe in miracles, they like to believe in magic and when they consume religion it's not on philosophical level, it's on a miraculous level. Jesus can do things for you. It's about goods, it's about the transference of goods and services from the cloud to your living room. You're broke, you lost your job in the early days of the Reagan administration and instead of watching Madonna on TV you're seeing these guys teaching prosperity theology. If you send your money, you gotta prove to Jesus that you really care, and he'll reward you tenfold. It's like buying a lottery ticket.

It's always the freeflow of information which is the major threat to the American way of life. To right-wing guys, there's nothing more dangerous than free access to information. And you know what that stems from? It stems from the begin-

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Frank Zappa

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ning of Christian theology, when Adam and Eve were in the garden, how did we get into trouble? It wasn't because it was an apple, it was the fruit of the tree of knowledge, so the essence of Christianity is, nobody gets to be smarter than God and access to knowledge and ownership of knowledge damns you. Knowledge itself is the work of the devil. We must not have knowledge and what leads to knowledge? Information. Nip it right there, nip it in the bud.

SPIN: What would it take to puncture the apathy of the average American, especially with elections coming up? Campaigns for that election will start in less than a year.

Zappa: I don't think you're going to puncture it in one swell foop. It doesn't puncture that easily. I'll tell you, I'm considering running for President in the next election.

SPIN: Really?

Zappa: Yeah. I've called two political consultants in Washington and we're just gonna do a little feasibility study to see what it would take. The idea is to run as a nonpartisan candidate and urge other people around the country to not only run but resign from the Democratic and the Republican parties because the Democrats stand for nothing except "I wish I was a Republican" and the Republicans stand for raw, unbridled evil and greed and ignorance smothered in balloons and ribbons. So that's really not much of a choice and it's nauseating to watch Democrats make speeches because they all wish they were Republicans.

SPIN: What do you think your chances'll be?

Zappa: Not good, but a chance is a chance.

SPIN: You're very serious about this? You're not just making a statement?

Zappa: If I did it I would do a real run. The problems about doing it are that in order to do a credible run you have to be on the ballot in every state. That's about a million dollars in legal fees and organization and bullshit just to get on the ballot. That's before you even buy an ad.

The theory that I have is this: Instead of going out and running the same way the other guys do for one thing I got no primary that I have to compete in, I don't have to go to Iowa, I don't have to go to New Hampshire, I don't have to join the greased pig race, I don't have to do any of that stuff. All I have to do is say, I'm gonna volunteer to run, I'm willing to do this. I'm willing to give up music for four years. I like this country enough that I'll give up something that I love for four years to do this job that nobody is doing right here.

George Bush, what has he really done here? He brought the troops home. He never should have sent the fucking troops there! And we read his lips, and now this education President thing. That's going to turn into a fiasco.

One of the interesting things about my platform is I want to do away with income tax.

SPIN: How would you do that?

Zappa: Income tax should be done away with anyway because when it was established it was an emergency tax and was supposed to have an end to it. Just like the toll booths on the highway. Income tax is a racket. The one thing the income tax does to everybody who pays it is it pisses you off because you earned that money and now the government is taking it away from you. If you gotta pay a tax, pay a tax when you buy something, not because you worked.

What this really gives you access to, in terms of tax recoupment, is the underground economy because when a guy is making a covert buck the goal is to spend the covert buck and at the point where you spent the covert buck you are now being able to tax every one of these guys who has laundered the cash. They gotta but a yacht someday, a house, they're gonna buy something.

SPIN: You're going to drive all of that Colombian drug money into foreign countries, like Canada.

Zappa: Let them do away with the income tax. The other thing is you would save a great deal of money on the personnel of the IRS itself. You still have to have somebody do administrative sales tax. I think you could do it with five percent of the labor force you have in the IRS. Naturally it would take an act of God to do away with state income taxes.

"Americans like to believe in miracles, they like to believe in magic and when they consume religion it's not on philosophical level, it's on a miraculous level. Jesus can do things for you. It's about goods."

SPIN: Fantastic idea. Not easy. Lots of problems.

Zappa: Well here's the other thing, think about this. Suppose I told you, from tomorrow on, you pay no income tax, no federal income tax. You'd be happy. You'd suddenly realize that you had another couple thousand bucks in your pocket. And it doesn't go in the bank. You'd go out and spend it. And there'd be a spike in the economy that would just go boom! The Dow went to 3,004.42—what do you think happens the day after they know that there's going to be no more income tax?

What I would propose to do, is have a five-year plan where the sales tax would be at twelve to fourteen percent on certain products. I'd try to exempt necessary foodstuffs, because that's where the poor get hurt. And I don't think that many Columbian drug dealers are buying that many cartons of milk and eggs and stuff. And so you're really not going to cripple the nation's economy by exempting that sort of thing. So for five years you keep that sales tax a little higher just to deal with the deficit. And at the point where the deficit is done away with, then you bring the sales tax down again to a maintenance level. I think you can run a pretty good economy that way.

SPIN: Have you discussed this with economists?

Zappa: I discussed it with my accountant who used to work for the IRS in Washington, D.C. He was head of collections for the Baltimore-Washington, D.C., area. He loves it.

The idea is that this is a zero balloon campaign. You want balloons then blow your own balloons. And the goal is to run the cheapest campaign in political history. I can sit at home and do talk shows all over the country on radio and answer questions directly to people who might want to vote. And it would cost what? Nothing. I don't believe that you really have to spend fifty million dollars or apply for matching funds from the federal government and then be forced to abide by all those rules in order to do it. Because if you're a nonpartisan candidate then what the fuck?

SPIN: Do you think you'd be appealing to mass America even with that platform?

Zappa: There's only one way to find out. I mean, if I lose, then so what?

SPIN: Do you think you'd make a difference if you won?

Zappa: Oh yeah. How could I make things any worse than what they already are?

SPIN: The least that could happen is that a lot of consciousnesses could be raised.

Zappa: Well, here's the least that could happen. You know what the other guys are going to say before they say it. And television is an entertainment medium. Now, you don't know what I'm going to say. Now you're in the middle of an election year and it's real dull. Do you think they would send someone over to talk to me every once in a while just to liven things up a bit?

I'm not going to debate these guys. As far as I'm concerned, they don't exist. Why should I sit there and talk over their bullshit. These guys want to sit there and riddle you with statistics. And what do you know? You're watching a debate at home and you're like, "Oh yeah. He knew a lot of numbers." Total horseshit.

SPIN: How do you define yourself as a musician? I was listening to on the way over here, *The Best Band You Never Saw*. I heard part Spike Jones, part Kurt Weill, part Mahavishnu Orchestra—many things.

Zappa: The thing I do is build things. And I have to participate in their manifestation. That's why I had to become a band leader and a guitar player. I would have been happy to just write it and turn it over to someone else. But they don't play it if you give it to them. I learned that when I first started to compose it.

SPIN: Are you also a satirist?

Zappa: Yes. I'm a composer-slash-sociologist.

SPIN: My last question comes from a 23-year-old waitress in Malibu: Are you happy?

Zappa: Today, yes. Tomorrow, I don't know. Yesterday, so-so. I go day by day. If you're looking for an average, maybe not. Because you can convince yourself that you're happy because of where you live and what you own, but if you watch TV and watch the news, it's hard to convince yourself that you're happy because of what's going on. I spend most of my free time watching the news. I'm addicted to it. If I'm not watching the news broadcasts then I'm watching the raw footage on C-Span. And it pisses me off.

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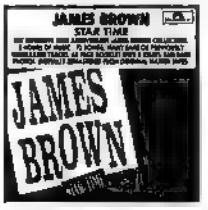

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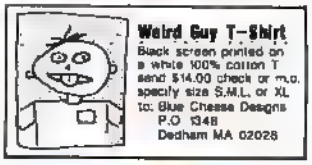
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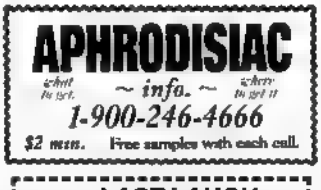

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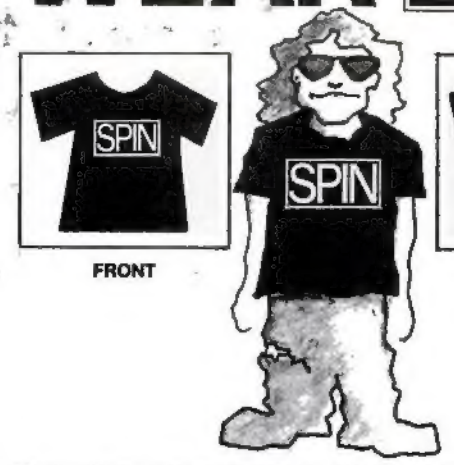

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This Land Is Our Land

America is a strange place. TAMA JANOWITZ sends strip-o-gram to Austin mayoral candidate. Read all about it.

A MAN NAMED JOHN JOHNSON called SPIN innumerable times. "I got a really hot story here," he said. "I'm running for da mayor of Austin. I been in the Federal Witness Security Program for nine years. I was a former hit man for da Mafia. Whyn't ya send somebody down?"

On Friday I gave him a call. "I'll be arriving at around four-thirty tomorrow," I said.

"Great!" he said. "Gimme a call when ya get to the hotel. I'll come pick you up; we'll go get something to eat, and I'll take ya over to Sixth Street to check out the action."

According to the *Austin American-Statesman*, John Johnson used to be John Tully, who pleaded guilty to four counts of murder for the Campisi crime family in 1975. He was arrested in 1974 for running a cocaine operation. Nine other Campisi family members confessed to the same murders and were also sentenced to prison.

It was hard to understand why someone who was in the Federal Witness Security Program would run for mayor, but I guessed I would find out when I arrived. Austin was verdant and lush in spring. On the way to the hotel the cab passed bars called Chaps, and Boots and Saddles. "How nice," I thought, "that they're so open about homosexuality down here. Austin must be a very liberal place." Then I remembered that I was in Texas and these bars were probably named after genuine cowboy equipment.

By the time I checked into the hotel it was nearly quarter to five. I took a few deep breaths and placed my call to John Johnson's home.

The line was busy. I waited a few minutes and tried again. Still busy. When the phone was still busy after constantly dialing for an hour, I called telephone repair. "That line appears to be out of order," the repairman said.

There was no John Johnson Campaign Headquarters listed in information. The campaign headquarters of the two main candidates (who might have been able to put me in touch with him) were closed. Desperate for help of some kind, I called the local TV news, the local newspaper; no one had any ideas or advice. Then I called the parents of the friend who takes care of my dogs when I travel. Her parents had moved to Austin a few years ago. "You're looking for John Johnson?" her father said. "The guy who runs a couple of hot dog stands on Sixth Street? Running for mayor?"

"Yes," I said.

"You know, he was on a public-access TV show the other night, with the other candidates. He stormed off in the middle of the show with an American flag around him."

"Why?" I said.

"Who knows?" my friend's father said. "He's a nut. Anyway, let me make a couple of phone calls." A minute later he phoned and gave me John Johnson's address.

I didn't have a car; I supposed I could take a taxi, although I didn't know how far from the hotel this guy lived, and I didn't particularly want to show up at a hit man's house, uninvited. Outside it was getting dark. Would the taxi even wait while I went and rang his doorbell and told him his phone was out of order? Then it occurred to me: In the old days, people sent telegrams. I would send John Johnson a telegram and inform him that his phone was out of order and I was waiting here at the hotel.

There were three listings in the book under Telegrams. Two of them were Western Union, but at both numbers nobody answered. The third telegram listing said, "'You dream it—we do it.' Male and female strippers—singers—actors. Characters of all kinds. Karaoke shows. 24-hour last-minute service. Featuring Movin' Melvin."

I didn't know about Movin' Melvin, but I dialed the number. "I'd like to send someone a telegram," I said. "Their phone is out of order, and I want to let them know so they can get in touch with me."

"We don't do that sort of thing," the woman who answered the phone said. "This is a singing telegram service."

"Fine," I said. I was growing irritated. "I don't care. Sing it to him, in that case—but just tell him the phone is out of order!"

"What is the message?" the woman said in a monotone.

I thought for a minute. "Dear John Johnson," I said. "Your phone is out of order. My name is Tama Janowitz, and—" I found I was beginning to sing, involuntarily, to the tune of "Tea for Two." "—I've come all the way from SPIN magazine in New York City, just to see you." Then I stopped. "How long will it take to get to him?"

"We have three people out delivering messages right now," the woman said. "I guess someone could get to him in about an hour."

I hung up, relieved. For no reason I kept dialing John Johnson's number. There was always a chance it might heal itself. At 9:30 I called the number again. This time John Johnson picked up the phone.

"I was sleeping," he said. "I took da phone off da hook. I been out—on da campaign trail—and I got in at five o'clock dis afternoon. Listen, I got a reporter on da other line. I'm gonna call ya back."

"Wait!" I said. "When will you call me back? I've been traveling all day—haven't eaten, waiting for you—I thought I'd go downstairs now, and meet . . . a friend, for a drink."

"I'll call ya back," he said, slamming the phone.

The person I had planned to meet called from the lobby while I waited. I explained I would come

continued on page 90

John Johnson: hit-man hot dog hawker and four-time mob murderer media maniac for mayor.

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